



MASTER PLAN

FOR

WATSON TOWNSHIP ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

_____, 2023

[v1.5_DRAFT (FOR BOARD)_10/28/2022]

WATSON TOWNSHIP

MASTER PLAN

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Prepared with the Assistance of

Professional Code Inspections of Michigan, Inc.

Landmark Strategies by Mark Sisson, AICP



LANDMARK STRATEGIES
by Mark Sisson, AICP
Community Planning and Zoning Consultation



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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Watson Township Master Plan is a policy document aimed at encouraging orderly and efficient land use. It provides the legal basis for local zoning and the logical basis for land division design, public improvement plans, and for facilitating and guiding the work of the Township Planning Commission and Township Board. It serves as a way of communicating to private individuals and organizations how they might relate their building projects to official Township plans. Likewise, the Master Plan is also the official way of connecting Township plans with those of adjacent communities, Allegan County, and the region as a whole.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended, gives Townships the authority to prepare and adopt Master Plans. This statute recognizes that the social and economic conditions affecting the Township are continuously changing. To assure that the Master Plan remains a useful guide for community change, the planning process must be continuous. Review of the Master Plan every year is therefore recommended; and comprehensive reviews of every five years is required.

The Master Plan (Land Use Plan) of Watson Township was originally adopted in June of 1990. The Planning Commission conducted several formal reviews of the Master Plan in the ensuing years and each time determined that the plan was still valid and representative of the community's vision. In 2009 the plan underwent a thorough and complete review and was significantly updated to reflect the evolving goals and policies of the era. The current update to the Master Plan retains all of the policies and recommendations included in the 2009 Plan and subsequent 2016 amendment, but includes updated community profiles, demographics and development trends (Chapters 3 and 4). Minor adjustments to the Townships' long range transportation goals are also included. The Master Plan continues to encourage further in-depth analysis and discussions among the Township Planning Commission, Township officials, and citizens alike. This plan is the culmination of countless iterations, adjustments and refinements to build upon the previous Master Plan's goals and objectives, its policies, and the Future Land Use Map itself.

The Planning Process

Planning, in simple terms, is a continuous process which seeks to improve a community and create a better environment. As such, the "Master Plan" is a tool by which "planning" can be reached. It is a tool to be used by both individuals and public officials when making decisions concerning the long-range future of a community.

The planning process consists of four basic steps:

1. **Analysis of the Existing Situation** – An analysis of the assets, problems and potential of the community. These "basic studies", include an evaluation of environmental factors, demographics, existing land use, the transportation network and other community infrastructure
2. **Plan Policies and Land Use arrangement** – A review and refinement of the stated community goals and objectives and the verbal and graphic representation of the form and allocation of land uses for the future. The "Future Land Use Plan" suggests how future growth should be directed into the most economical, healthful, aesthetically pleasing, and ecologically sound pattern of development.
3. **Plan Implementation** – The "action plan" or "implementation plan" element of this document describes what should be done to carry out the plan. The first step in the implementation phase is the adoption of this plan by the Planning Commission. Then, through a series of coordinated actions (such as public education, zoning and subdivision regulations, systematic utility extensions and street improvements), the Township will implement the provisions of the Plan.
4. **Continued Planning** – In order for the Plan to have credibility and meaningful effect, it is necessary to follow through with a program of continuous planning. This involves periodic review and amendment of the Plan (such as this effort), the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, capital improvements program and other official policies of the Township.

Chapter 2

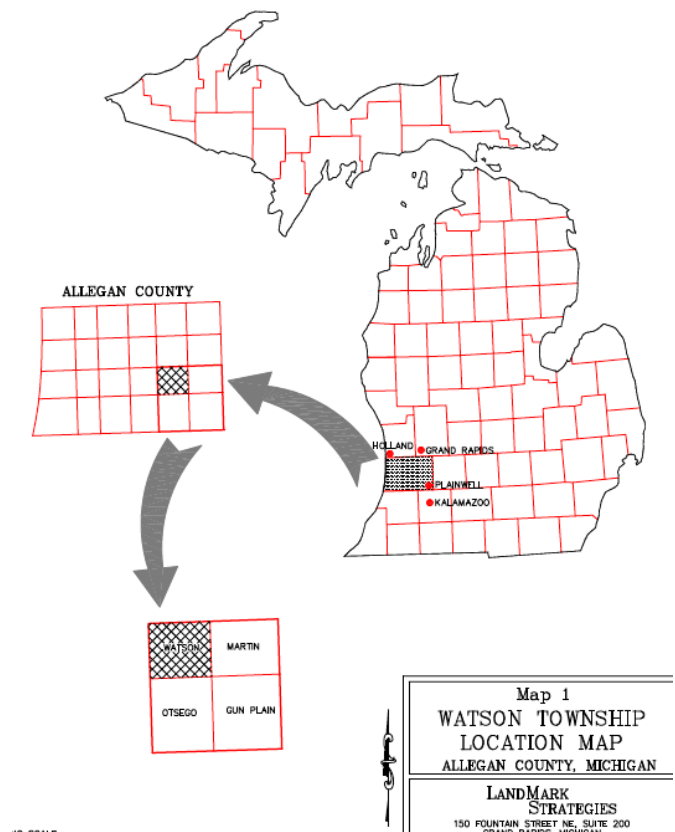
NATURAL FEATURES AND COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

In every community geography and the physical environment provides both opportunities and constraints for development. While easy access to an expressway may mean opportunities for economic development, economic development may bring unwanted change or problems with traffic congestion. While a wetland or heavy soils can hinder construction, the presence of a tree stand can enhance a development project. The natural environment also contains valuable resources such as potable groundwater supplies and farmland. These and other resources need to be both conserved and protected if they are to be enjoyed by future generations. The following discussion highlights the significant physical features of the Township and several aspects of the local environment that are important planning considerations for Watson Township.

Regional Location

Watson Township encompasses 36 square miles of land area in the southeast corner of Allegan County which is situated in the southwestern portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. It is six miles north of the border of Kalamazoo County on the south and six miles from Barry County on the east. It is roughly 20 miles north of Kalamazoo and approximately 30 miles south of Grand Rapids. The City of Allegan, the county seat, is located only three miles to the west and the twin cities of Otsego and Plainwell are three and four miles south, respectively.

Two major transportation corridors traverse the Township. US-131 is a federal, limited access highway and M-222 is a two-lane state highway.



US-131 runs north and south along the eastern edge of the community, connecting points from the Indiana border area to the northern Lower Peninsula. M-222 travels through the southern portion of the Township in an east/west fashion. It connects US-131 to M-89 in Allegan. From Allegan, one can travel on M-89 to Holland, near the Lake Michigan shore. The US-131/M-222 intersection serves as the primary gateway for Watson Township as well as for the Village of Martin, which is located one half mile east of the US-131/M-222 intersection.

Topography

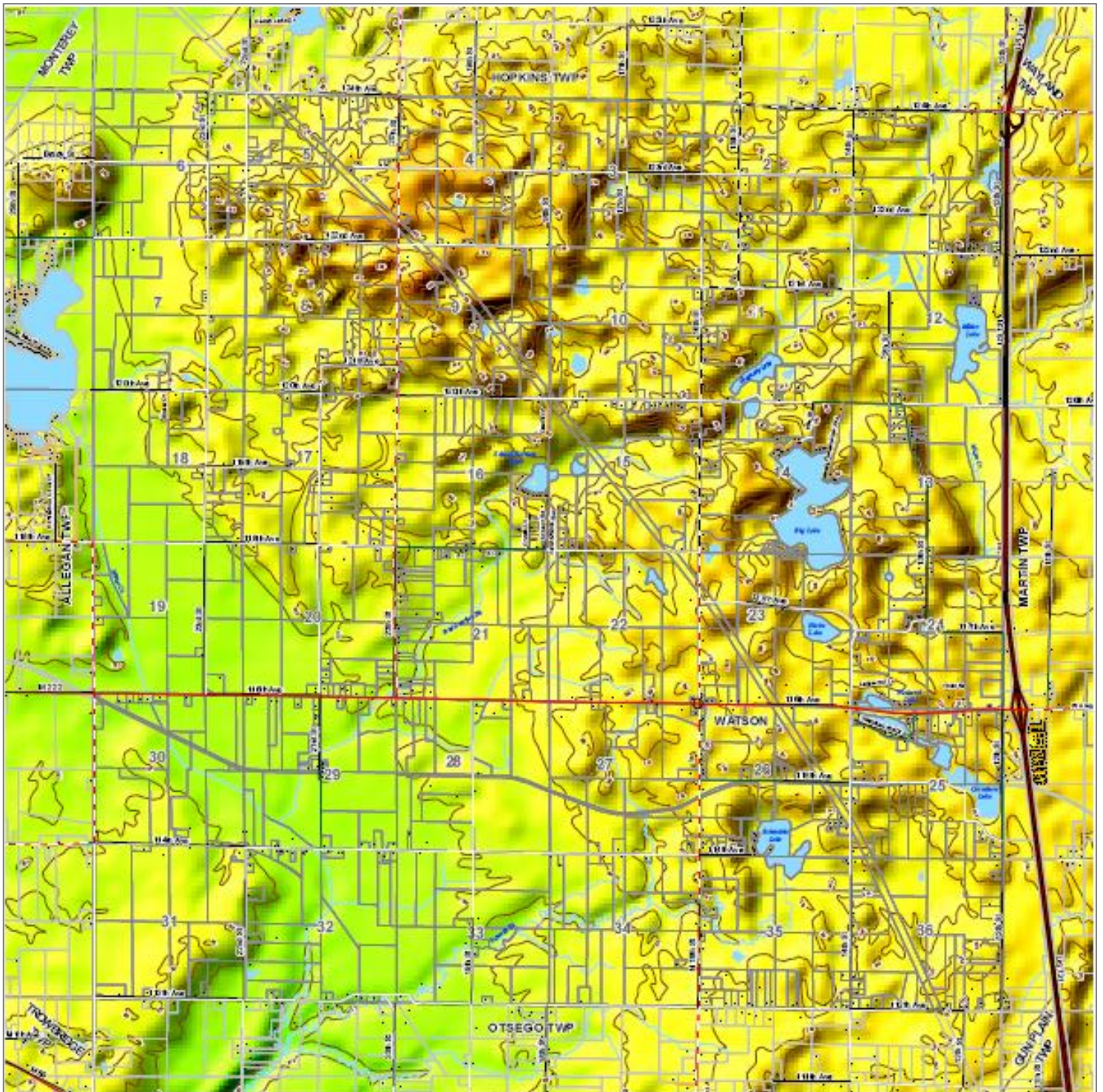
A basic understanding of the Township's topography is useful because differences in ground elevation and slope have influenced and will continue to significantly influence the pattern of development and future land use. As with most of southwestern Michigan, Watson Township was shaped by the most recent glaciers as they were receding. This created Lake Michigan and most of the major inland water features, hills, ridges and low areas. The topography of Watson Township ranges from flat to hilly. The flattest terrain occurs in the southwestern portions and the steepest terrain exists in the north and northeastern sections of the Township. Watson Township relatively minor topographic changes occur within a general range of elevations from between about 690 feet above sea level where Miner Creek and Schnable Brook exit the Township in the southwest(Section 32) to around 920 feet above sea level in the hills located in the north in sections 8 and 9. The north and eastern three fourths of the Township are topographically the most diverse area and contain numerous ridgelines, woodlands, lakes and wetlands.

Climate

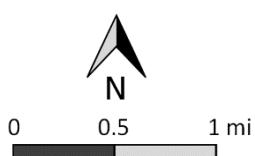
The climate is typical of much of southwestern Michigan. It is warm during the summer when temperatures average in the 70's and cold during the winter with temperatures in the 20's. The warmest month of the year is July with an average temperature of 84°F. January is typically the coldest month with an average minimum temperature 17°F. Precipitation averages 37.4 inches on an annual basis. Rainfall is evenly distributed throughout the year, though September is the wettest month with an average rainfall of 4.1 inches.

Soils

Soils play an important part in determining the suitability of land for specific types of land uses. Agricultural uses in particular are determined based on what type of products can be grown in the soil type(s) present on a given parcel of land. More intensive uses of the land can also be based on soil



Watson Township
Topographic Map



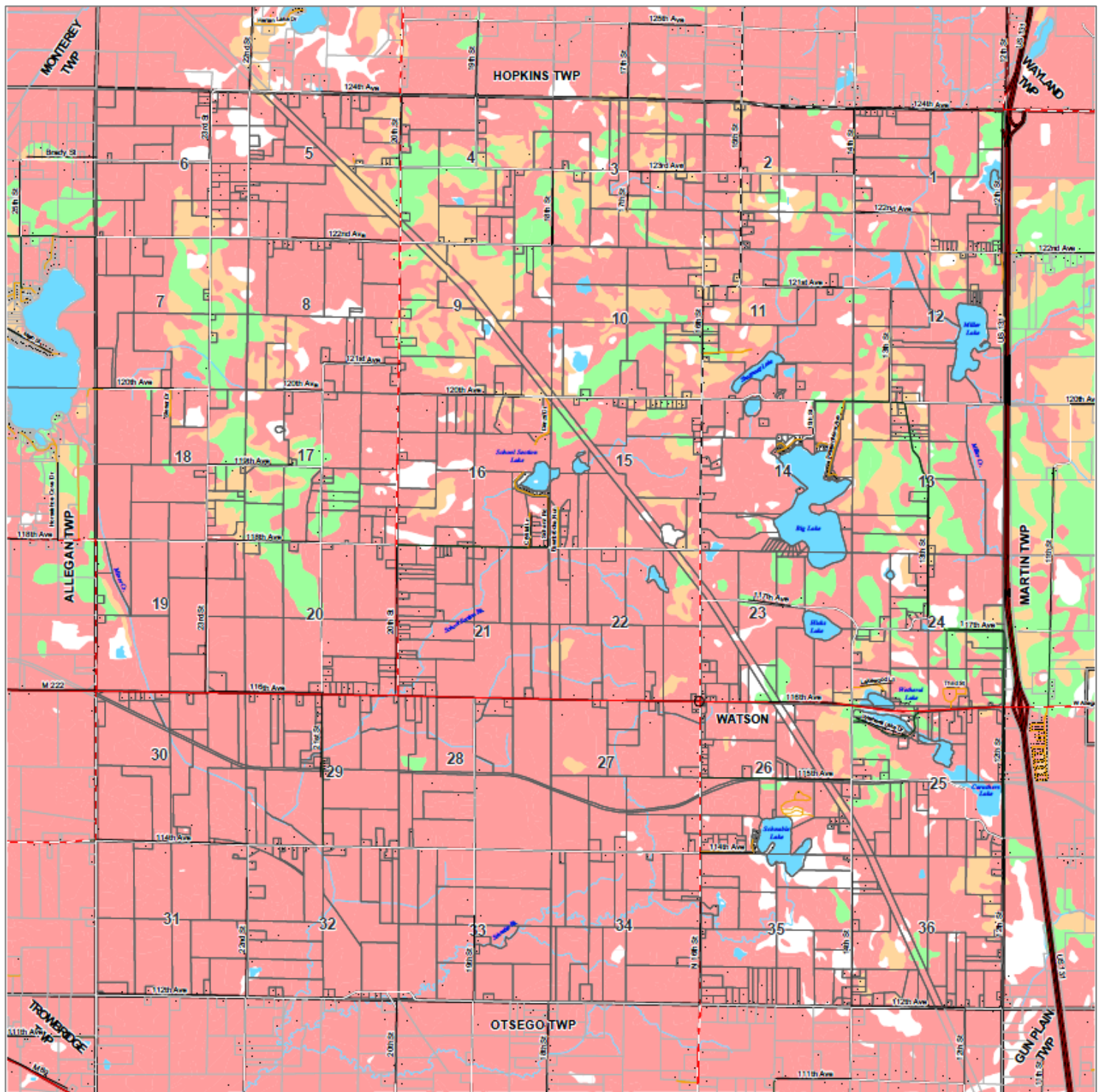
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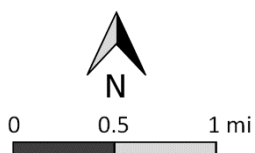
characteristics such as permeability, slope, filtering capacity, bank stability, wetness etc.

The soils in Watson Township range from scattered areas of sand to predominantly heavy loams, clays and mucks. An overview of these soil associations is useful in identifying the general suitability of soils for certain types of land use and provide further insight into the topography and drainage of the Township. It is important to note that in Watson Township, existing land use has been largely determined by the suitability of the soils. In any rural community having as its goal the preservation of its rural qualities, attention to the natural suitability and limitations of the soil is paramount. Descriptions of the various soil associations are as follows: (Note: *The Soil Survey of Allegan County, 1987 is a complete resource on the area's soils. It provides maps and more detailed descriptions of the various soil associations and their characteristics*);

1. Capac - Rimer - Pipestone. This soil association covers the southeast one-third of the Township where topography is nearly level to undulating. The area consists of poorly drained loams, loamy sands and sands. The major soils in the association are very poorly suited for building purposes. Wetness and poor filtering capacity make the soils ill-suited for private septic systems as well. This association is, however, well suited for farming purposes.
2. Oshtemo - Chelsea - Ockley. This soil association is situated in the north central area of the Township. It consists of well drained to excessively well drained loamy and sandy soils. The topography is rolling to very hilly with many slopes in excess of 18%. Most of the area is presently wooded. The excessive slopes make this area generally unsuited for farming, building sites and septic systems.
3. Chelsea - Ockley - Oshtemo. This association of soils covers over 40% of the Township's land area. Situated throughout most of the Township's eastern and northeastern sections as well as in the northwest, these soils are predominantly sandy and loamy. In the northwest, the topography ranges from nearly level to gently rolling. In the north and east the topography is rolling. The major soils in this association are moderately suited to well suited for building and septic systems. Poor filtration capacity and excessive slopes are limitations that are found in many areas however.
4. Marlette - Capac - Metea. This association is situated in the central and extreme southeast portions of the Township. It covers approximately 4 square miles in total land area. In both areas the topography is hilly with several low wetland depressions and small lakes. The major soils are moderately well drained to poorly drained sands and loams. Most of the land is presently wooded or idle farmland. Those soils presently being farmed are fairly well suited for that purpose. Because of an underlying clay layer most of this association is poorly suited for building development and on-site septic systems.
5. Sebawa - Colwood - Brady. This association is found in the southwest corner of the Township and consists of nearly level, poorly drained sands, loams and silty material. Much of the higher ground in this area is well suited to crop land. The lower ground is excessively wet and is presently wooded. Because of the wetness and poor permeability, building development and septic systems suitability is very poor.



Watson Township Soil Suitability Map for Septic Systems



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Section Boundaries

Septic Suitability*

- Not Rated
- Severe Limitations
- Moderate Limitations
- Slight Limitations

* Septic suitability for absorption fields. Limiting factors may include flooding, permeability, ponding, poor filtering, slope, subsidence and wetness properties of the soil. Site specific conditions may vary and some limitations may be overcome through site engineering.

Source: 1983 USDA Soil Survey of Allegan County. Maps generated and digitized by Western Michigan University.

In a rural area such as Watson Township where public sewer facilities are not available and the prospect for their future provision on a large-scale is unlikely, the ability of soils to accommodate private septic systems is a crucial element in land use planning. Due to poor percolation and wetness, and in the other extreme, the inability of permeable soils to adequately filter effluent before it reaches an underground aquifer, many areas of Watson Township must be considered generally unsuitable for intensive development. As a result, the location and character of new development must in part be determined by the ability of soils to accommodate private septic systems.

The suitability of soils for supporting building structures can be another important influence factor on development. Some areas of the Township have soils which due to a high water table, flooding, shrink-swell potential, steep slope, and other factors place severe limitations on the ability to construct buildings. Often times these limitations are so severe that special designs, special and costly construction methods, and increased maintenance are required.

The preceding map set illustrates those areas of the township which have characteristics of soil, topography and drainage which are considered poorly suited for both structural development and septic systems. One map rates surface soils as to their suitability for supporting buildings (development) and the other rates soils on their ability to attenuate wastewater leachate from septic systems. The maps are based on information contained in the "Soil Survey of Allegan County, Michigan" prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The maps take into consideration soil percolation rates, wetness, filter qualities, shrink-swell properties, and slope.

The soils which have been identified as being generally unsuitable for development or septic use but may still be judged useful based upon a more detailed site analysis or with on-site modification. However, significant development in these areas could greatly increase the potential for groundwater degradation and public health hazards and in turn, may eventually lead to a need and demand for public utilities. If such problems and their associated high cost are to be avoided, the density and intensity of development in rural areas with poor soils should be held to a minimum.

The "Farmland/Development Suitability Map" represents an analysis that gives further insight into farming and developmental capabilities of the various soils found in Watson Township. The analysis shows that the best farmland soils often times constrain non-farm use and development. As with soils in general, the primary limitations are poor drainage, wetness or rapid permeability,

all of which contribute to an inability to support conventional on-site septic systems and/or present significant problems when constructing building foundations, basements and roads.

Soil Group A. These soils (darker green) are prime farmland or prime if drained. They pose severe septic and building limitations primarily due to wetness and ponding. These soils should be considered as the most desirable for long term farming purposes. Exceptions are prime soils that are found in flood plains and lowlands associated with stream courses. Intensive cultivation requires improved drainage and farming practices can be a significant threat to surface water quality.

These soils should also be considered the least desirable from a development standpoint with or without utilities and therefore should support the lowest densities of residential development. In Watson most of these soils are located in the southwest 1/3 of the Township.

Soil Group B. These (bright green) are soils well suited for specialty crops and/or moderately suited for field crops with severe septic system and severe building limitations. Due to high water tables and wetness these soils pose severe limitations on septic systems and buildings. These soils should be considered moderately to well suited for farming practices with increased management. They are widely scattered and mostly in the northern half of the Township. Group B soils, along with Group A, should be considered the least supportive of development, with or without utilities and therefore should support the lowest densities of residential development

Soil Group C These (yellow) are Prime Farmland or soils moderately suited for field crops or well suited for specialty crops with slight to moderate septic limitations and slight to moderate building limitations.

These soils are grouped together to illustrate the soil types that appear to be the most naturally suited for development without utilities. Many of the same soil qualities that allow them to support septic systems and structures also make them good farmland.

The high rolling nature of these areas in the north and northwest, and remnant woodlands help to make the northern part of the township unique to, both visually and environmentally. Due to the steep slopes, intensive erosion protection techniques and other farmland management methods are required to carry out farming on the soils. The importance of the areas as farmland should therefore not be considered as high as areas classified as prime or moderately suited farmland areas. Development should be limited due to the adverse environmental consequences that would result in the process of reshaping and altering the landscape in support of development.

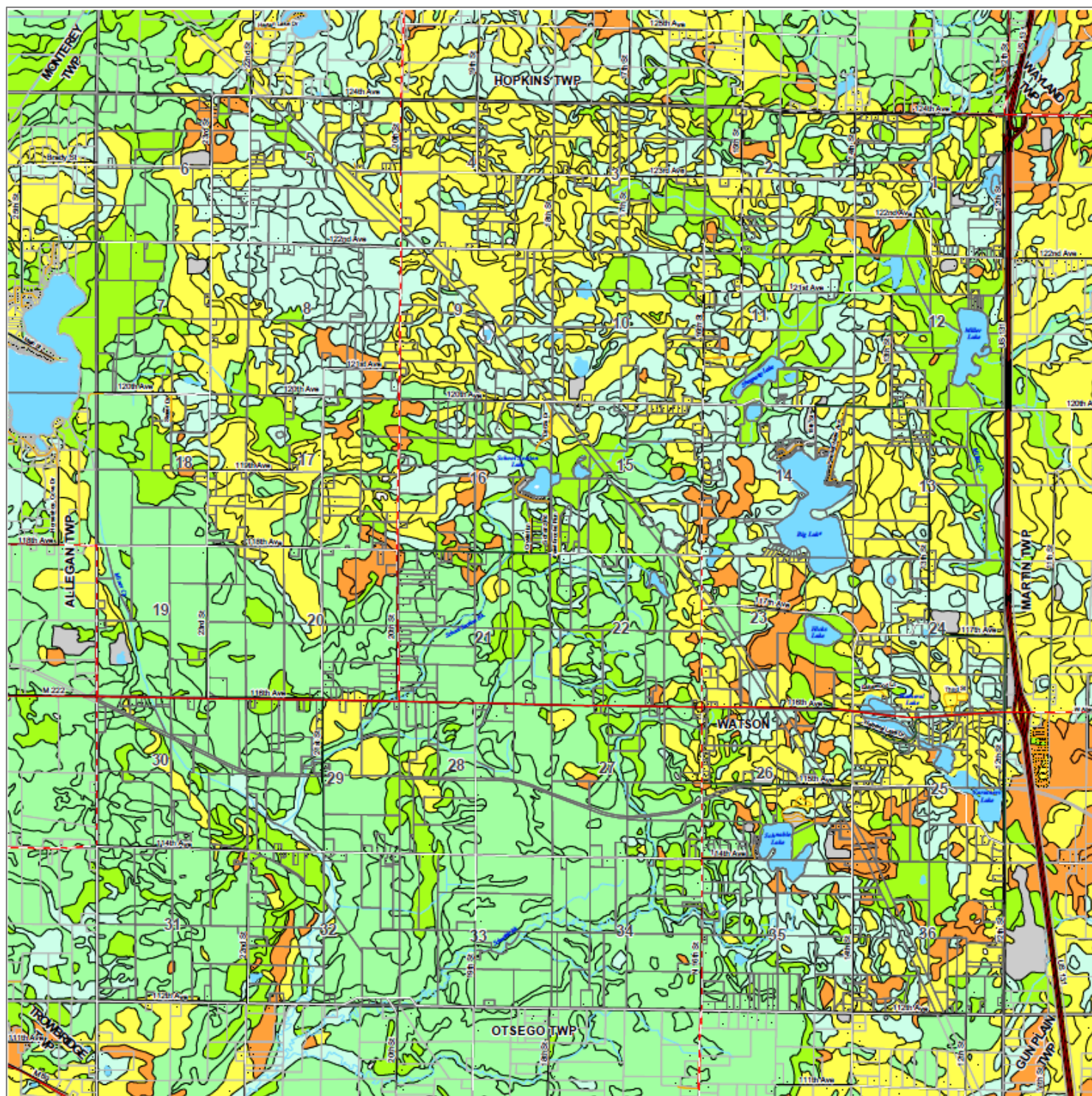
Soil Group D. These are (orange-brown) Prime Farmland or soils moderately suited for field crops or suited for specialty crop soils with severe septic limitations but slight to moderate building limitations. They are scattered throughout but are not prevalent in the Township. The primary development limitation for these soils is rapid permeability which makes heavy or intensive septic system utilization a potential threat to ground water. Very low development

density maybe acceptable but increased densities of development should only be allowed if the ground water source is well protected. Moderate to high densities should only be allowed when utilities (at least sewer) are available.

Soil Group E. These soils (light blue) are poorly suited for farming and unsuited for development due to slope, wetness and flooding. The majority of these soils are in the steeply rolling hills found in the north and east central parts of the Township. In these areas, slopes in excess of 12 percent and often in excess of 18 percent make farming difficult and intensive development impractical.

Also included are areas of wetlands that are unsuited for farming and development. The largest of these areas are found along the drainage courses and around the major lakes of the Township.








Soil Group F. Within Watson Township there are a small number of active or un-reclaimed sand and gravel mining operations where the surface and subsurface soils have been removed. These areas require independent investigation to determine their use capability.



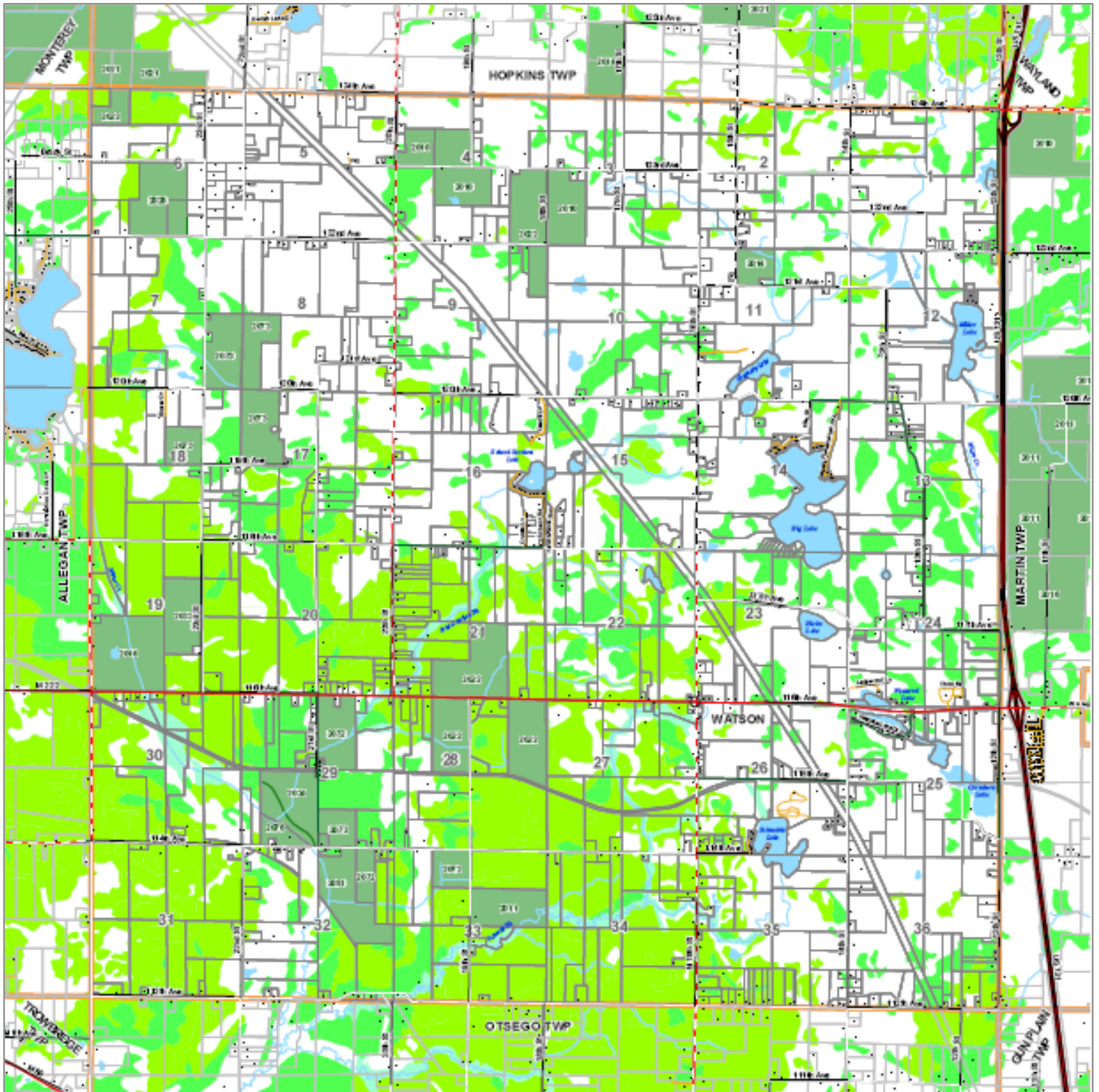
Watson Township Farmland/Development Suitability



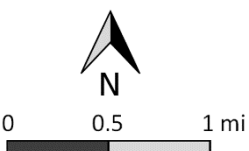
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-  Section Boundaries
Soil Category*
 Group A
 Group B
 Group C
 Group D
 Group E
 Group F

* Soil uses coded by Mark Sisson, Landmark Strategies, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Source: 1983 USDA Soil Survey of Allegan County. Maps generated and digitized by Western Michigan University.



Watson Township
Prime Farmland
with Agricultural Protection



LEGEND

- Section Boundaries
- Prime Farmland***
 - Unconditional
 - Where drained
 - Where drained and protected from flooding
- Protected Lands**
 - PA 116

* Areas of the map shown as prime farmland based on soil type are not considered prime farmland if they are urbanized or built up.

Source: 1983 USDA Soil Survey of Allegan County. Maps generated and digitized by Western Michigan University.

The Prime Farmlands Map on the previous page shows the location of prime agricultural lands within the Township as determined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Prime farmland is land that is naturally endowed with the soil quality, growing season and moisture content that allows it to sustain high crop yields under average farming practices. The Prime Farmlands Map illustrates areas that are considered prime in their natural state as and also shows areas that are "prime" when augmented by improved drainage systems. Farm tracts that have been protected through enrollment in the P.A. 116 "Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program" are also illustrated on the map. The P.A. 116 program is further explained in the next chapter.

The Township's prime farmland soils are quite extensive but they are not universal. Most occur in the southwest one half of the Township. The existence of prime farmland and the fact that it and other "less than prime" soils in the township remains under active cultivation are very important factors in the development of the Master Plan for the Township.

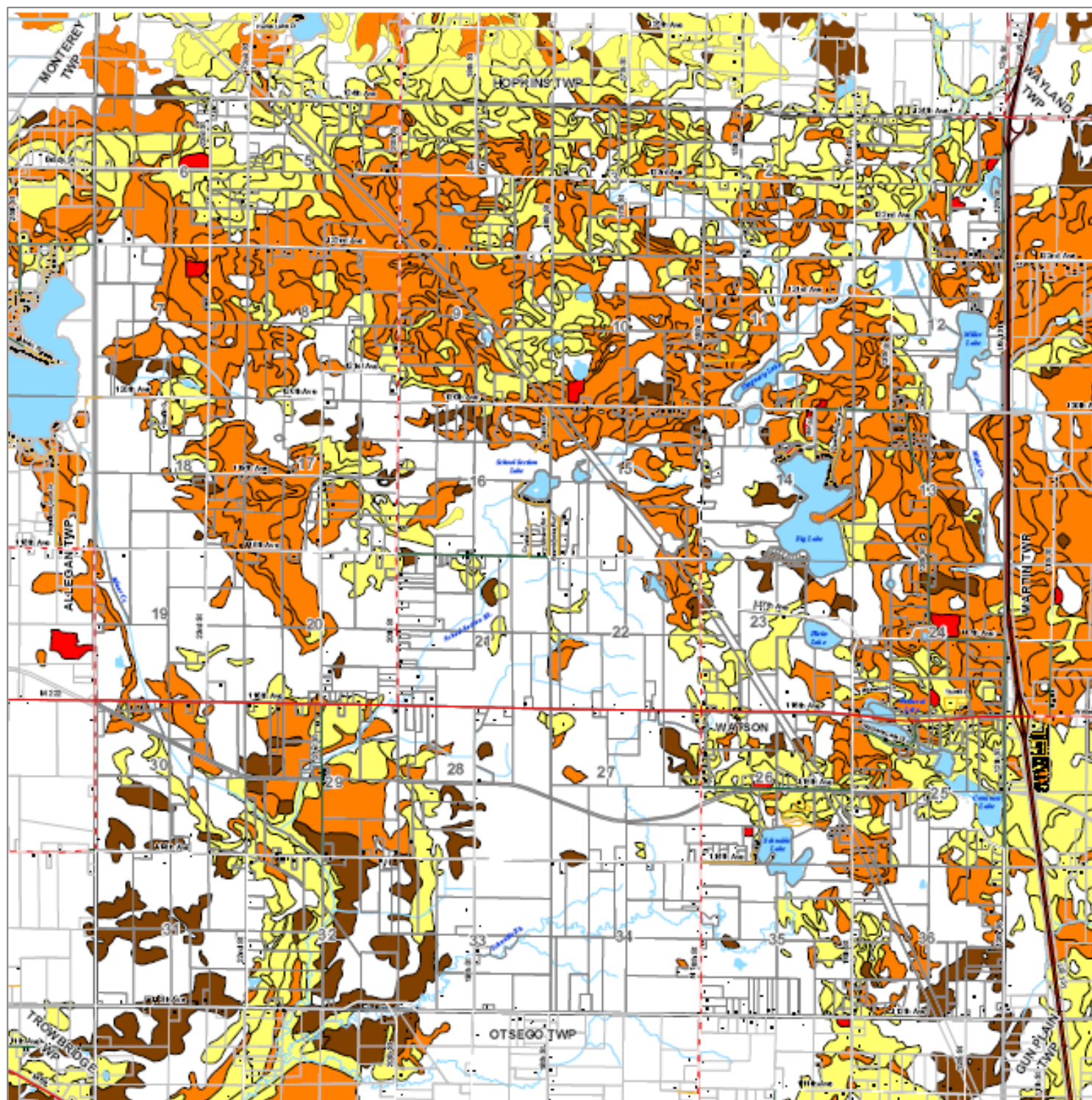
Mining Resources

Within Watson Township are glacially created landforms which contain extensive deposits of sand and gravel. Used as construction material, these deposits are basic resources necessary for the construction industry and economic development in general. It is necessary and unavoidable that these deposits will continue to be tapped to support the construction of new roads and other development within and near Watson Township.

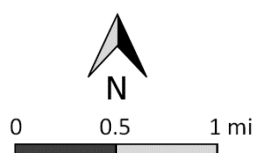
The following map illustrates the generalized classification of soils within 5 to 6 feet of the surface in terms of the possibility for finding usable deposits of construction materials (sand, sand and gravel and topsoil). As can be seen on the map, sand and gravel deposits are found extensively throughout the north and northeastern portions of the Township as well as in the southwest and southeast. At the present time, there are at five (5) active sand and gravel mines in the Township.

Groundwater

All residents within Watson Township derive their domestic water supply from groundwater sources. The depth of the wells range from shallow stab wells to wells over 150 feet in depth. According to the Allegan County Health Department, water quality within the Township's aquifers continues to be generally good. Over the years however, there have been isolated instances where groundwater contamination has occurred.



Watson Township
Sand & Gravel
Deposits



LEGEND

Section Boundaries

Soil Category*

- Sand Deposit
- Sand and Gravel Deposit
- Topsoil Deposit
- Extraction Site

* Note: Based upon soil profiles within six (6) feet of the surface. Deposits at depths greater than six feet are not predicted by this map.

Source: 1983 USDA Soil Survey of Allegan County. Maps generated and digitized by Western Michigan University.

Groundwater will continue to be the primary source of domestic water in Watson Township for the foreseeable future. Because of this, measures to protect the groundwater aquifers are important if residents are to continue to have safe supplies. From a general planning standpoint, such measures should involve limiting the densities of development in areas where the aquifers are shallow and unprotected by impermeable substrata.

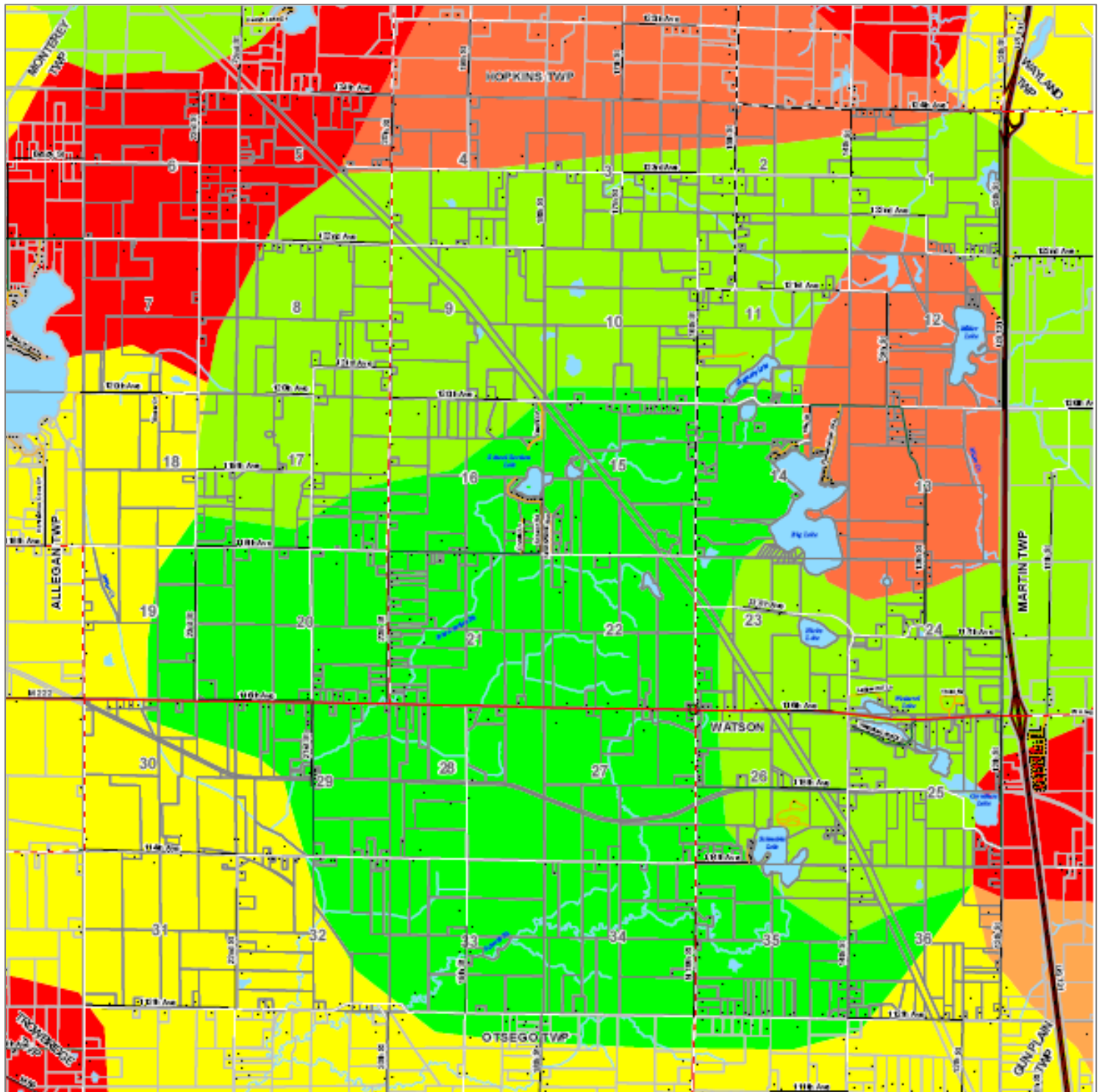
Groundwater from private wells supply all of the water for residential, commercial and industrial land uses within Watson Township. Many of these wells draw from the confined glacial drift aquifer, which is separated from the ground surface by a "*confining*" layer of clay or rock. Some wells draw from the unconfined aquifer, which is more vulnerable to contamination from the ground surface.

Groundwater is an important but unseen resource. Because it is not easily observed, it is particularly vulnerable to mismanagement and contamination. The leading causes of groundwater contamination in Michigan are from small businesses and agriculture. More than 50% of all contamination comes from small businesses that use organic solvents, such as benzene, toluene and xylene, and heavy metals, such as lead, chromium and zinc. The origin of the problem stems from careless storage and handling of hazardous substances.

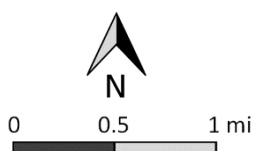
There continues to be a general lack of data regarding the local aquifers and the extent to which contamination may already exist. Recent advances at the county and state levels in collecting and mapping well log data promise to improve this situation and may soon allow local units to access well data for use in local land use planning. The following map shows the "sensitivity of various regions of the Township to groundwater contamination. Areas in the Township which are most vulnerable to groundwater contamination are shown in red and are located in the north and east central areas. Those least vulnerable are shown in green and are found in the central portions. The green areas are protected by layers of heavy soils whereas the red and pink areas often have porous layers of soil that allow rapid infiltration of pollutants.

Drainage, Wetlands and Water Resources

There are two major watersheds in the Township. The northern one-third of the Township drains to the north and is included in the Miller Creek/Rabbit River watershed. The southwestern two-thirds of the Township drains to the south, within the Miner Creek/Schnable Brook watershed. Both of these watersheds are within the Kalamazoo River basin.



Watson Township Groundwater Sensitivity



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□ Section Boundaries

Groundwater Sensitivity*

- Very High
- High
- Moderate to High
- Moderate to Low

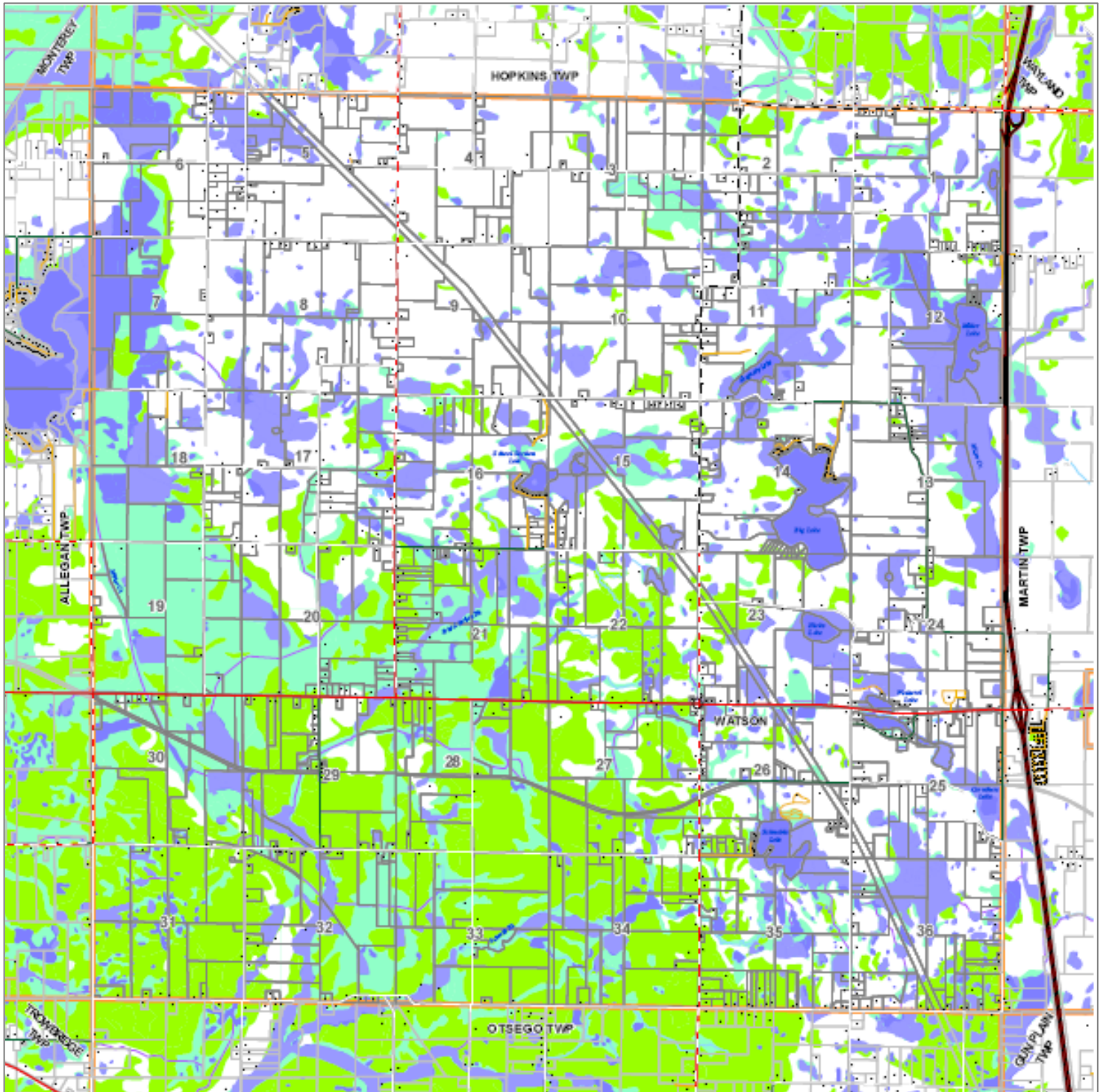
- Low
- Very Low

Source: Lusch, D. Et al. Michigan State University Center for Remote Sensing

The natural drainage network consists of several small streams including Miller Creek, Schnable Brook, Miner Creek and School Section Brook. This system of streams has been greatly modified over the years and augmented by an extensive system of surface drains and a few underground drains. The majority of these "county drains" are in the southwest portion of the Township where the topography is relatively flat and the water table is naturally high. The improved drainage network has allowed much of the areas most naturally fertile soils to be put into cultivation. The Allegan County Drain Commission has primary responsibility for maintaining this drainage system. There are no major flood plains in the community and with the exception of minor flooding around several of the local lakes, flooding has not historically been a major problem within the Township.

The largest lake is Big Lake, the majority of which is located in Section 14 and encompasses 140 acres of area. Other major bodies of water include Miller Lake, Schnable Lake, School Section Lake, Caruthers Lake, Wetherall Lake and Hicks Lake. With the exception of Hicks Lake and Caruthers Lake, each has seen some degree of residential and or recreational development. Only Big Lake has an established public access site. The fluctuation of water levels on some of these lakes has caused occasional septic field failures for homes located in low shoreline settings. A recent drain assessment has been implemented upon the Big Lake area to stabilize water levels and help mitigate this issue, however, the effects of these failures on surface water quality upon other lakes in the Township should continue to be closely monitored.

In addition to several lakes being located in the Township, there are numerous smaller, water filled depressions and wetlands. Wetlands can be found ranging from an acre or smaller to areas in excess of 150 acres. In particular, larger wetland areas are located in proximity to Miller Lake, Schnable Lake, School Section Lake and Shagnasty Lake. Smaller areas are located throughout the township, most predominately in the eastern half. Many but not all of the wetlands are classified by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality as "protected wetlands" due to size or classification issues. However, for the purposes of land use planning, a wetland label is supported by the characteristics of water and/or saturated soils, plant and animal habitat and soil type. Wetlands play an important role in maintaining the ecological health and biological diversity of the place where they are located. Wetlands, depending on their type, can serve to filter water contaminants, prior to entering the groundwater table, and should be protected to the maximum extent possible.



Watson Township Hydrology



LEGEND

Section Boundaries

Water Legend

Watercourses

County Drains

Wetlands Legend

National Wetlands Inventor Wetlands*

96 Land Use Wetlands**

Hydric Soils

Non-Hydric Soil

Possibly Hydric Soil***

Hydric Soil

Water

* Digitized from US Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory maps. Wetlands were mapped from high-altitude color-sensitive aerial photographs in the 1970s and 1980s.

** All classified 600 category wetlands, lowlands hardwoods, and lowland conifers.

*** These soils may be hydric under certain site-specific conditions.

Woodlands/Greenspace

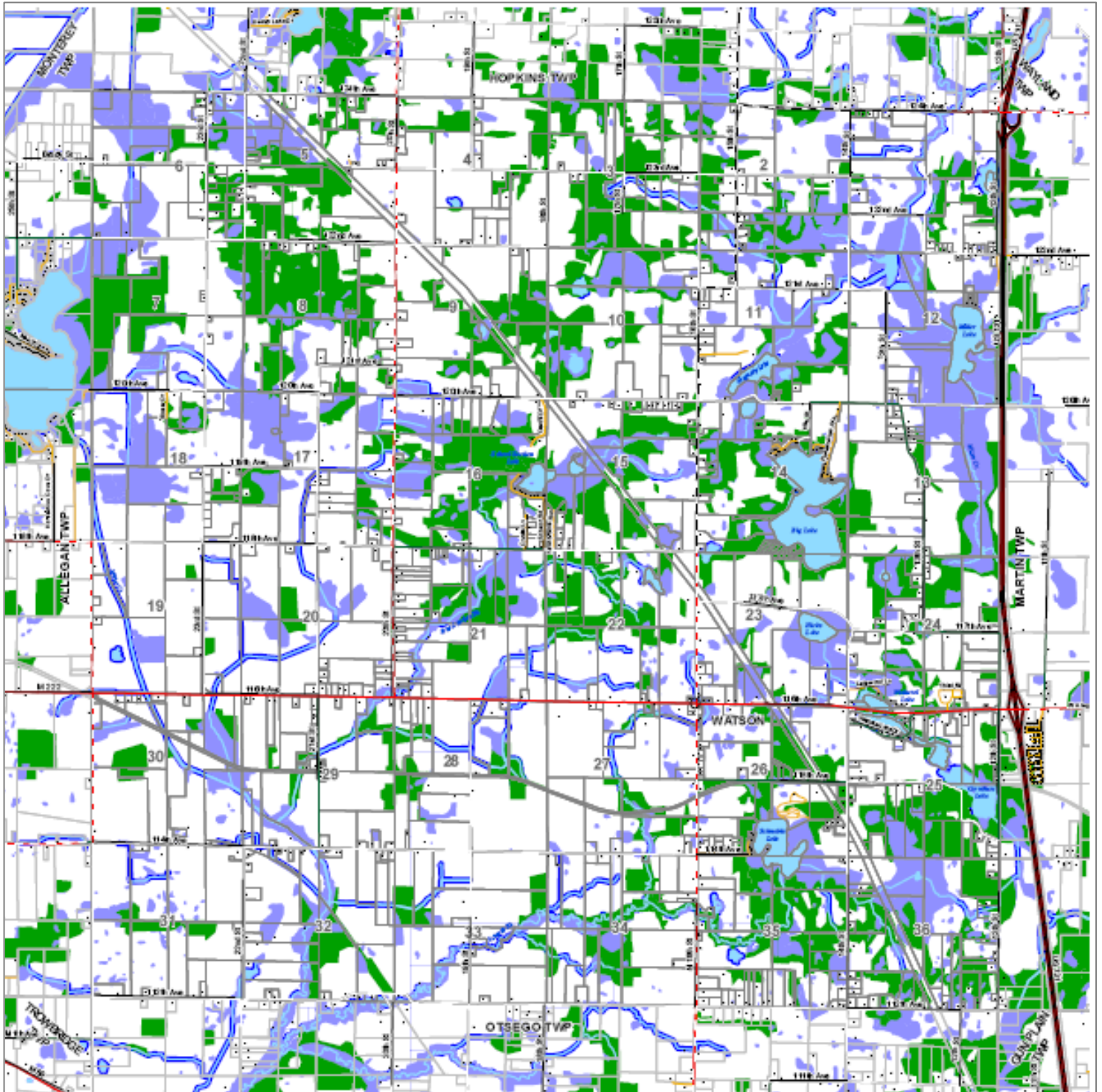
Wooded areas are present in the township with the most extensive of these associated with steep hills and low lying wetlands and lakes. While there are no large-scale upland forests remaining in the area, taken in combination with wooded wetlands there remains a fairly extensive patchwork of woodland cover especially in the north and east. Local forested lands include northern, central and lowland hardwoods; aspen and birch associations, and pine stands. These wooded areas provide a variety of habitat settings for wildlife and are an important attribute of the local landscape. In the future, the limited woodland areas are likely to be attractive focal points for housing development. Development designs which recognize tree stands as an important amenity to be preserved should be required. Such designs will lead to better projects and will contribute to maintaining the overall rural character of the Township.

Wildlife

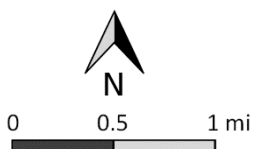
With a majority of the Township dedicated to agriculture and open land, it is prime habitat for white tail deer. The brush, woodlands, wetlands, native grasslands and waterways also provide good habitat for squirrels, and raccoon. Other wildlife includes cottontail rabbits, red and gray fox, muskrat, mink, opossum, skunk, various song birds, ruffed grouse, woodcocks, Great Blue Herons and waterfowl. Sandhill Cranes, and Trumpeter Swans may also exist in the Township and the Eastern Massasauga rattle snake may also occur here and is protected by the State of Michigan as a species of special concern. The many lakes along with the miles of small streams and open drains also support a variety of game fish. This variety of wildlife is an impressive resource and provides those who hunt, fish, and enjoy viewing wildlife with invaluable recreational opportunities.

Existing Land Use and Density Study

The pattern of land use within Watson Township is typical of most rural townships in the region. Development consists largely of low density, single-family housing distributed thinly throughout the Township. The Township's total land area consists of 35.4 square miles or 22,650 acres. The existing land use remains heavily agricultural in nature but also includes large areas of wooded and open land with scattered rural residential concentrations. In general, the most intense development can be found within one half mile of the US-131 and M-222 interchange where a mobile home park and small industrial park have located and around several of the Township's lakes. Very little commercial development activity has occurred here and most residential development activity has



Watson Township Greenspace



LEGEND

Section Boundaries

Greenspace Legend*

Wetlands

Floodplain

Woodlands

Preserved Lands

Parks

Vacant Lands (Publicly Owned)

Cemeteries

Golf Courses

Water Buffer (100 ft)

* WETLANDS – Combined National Wetlands Inventory and 1996 Land Use.

FLOODPLAIN – Federal Emergency Management Agency 100 Year Floodplain.

WOODLANDS – 1996 Land Use.

All other features are delineated from tax parcel boundaries.

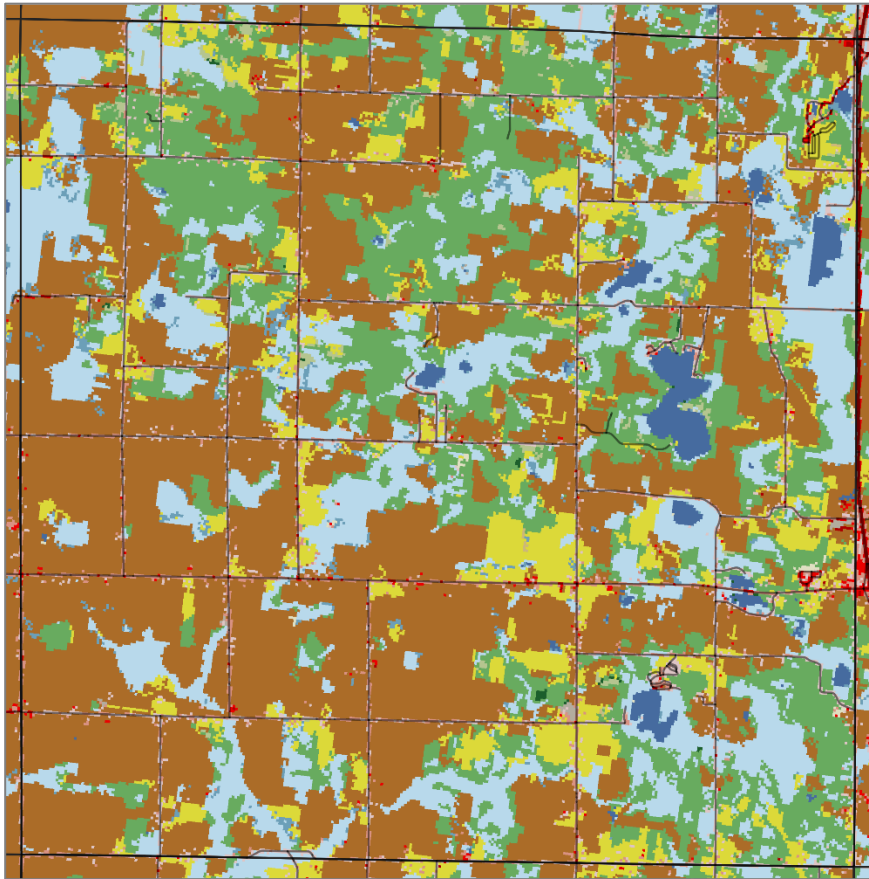
been limited to small private road developments and single lot developments along many of the Township's rural roads. A handful of gravel mining operations also occur in the northern half of the Township. Other land uses include scattered institutional uses such as churches, cemeteries, the Township Hall, and several commercial campgrounds and RV parks. The only formal public recreational use is a DNR public access site on the north end of Big Lake.

The maps presented below represent Watson Township land use coverage as determined by the National Land Cover Database (NLCD) from the U.S. Geological Survey for the years 2001, 2008, and 2019. Data is presented in raster form and displayed as large, color-coded pixels, each accounting for approximately 900 square meters (0.22 acres) of area. Following the representations is an analysis of the land coverage changes from 2001 to 2008 and 2008 to 2019. Changes in total pixels of each land coverage value (as identified in the legend) are measured by Township section to isolate those that experienced more intense changes than others at different points in time. More specifically, NLCD land coverage values 21 (*Developed, Open Space*), 22 (*Developed, Low Density*), 23 (*Developed, Medium Intensity*), and 24 (*Developed, High Intensity*) are analyzed to determine the amount of gross development and net development over said intervals. Said terms are defined as follows:

“Gross development” – The area within a given section, represented as a percent of the total, that changed within a given period either from one development value to another or from a non-development value to a development value.

“Net development” – The area within a given section, represented as a percent of the total, that changed within a given period only from a non-development value to a development value. This metric can also be viewed as an isolated measurement of the amount of greenspace converted to developed space.

Conclusions are displayed on the following pages.



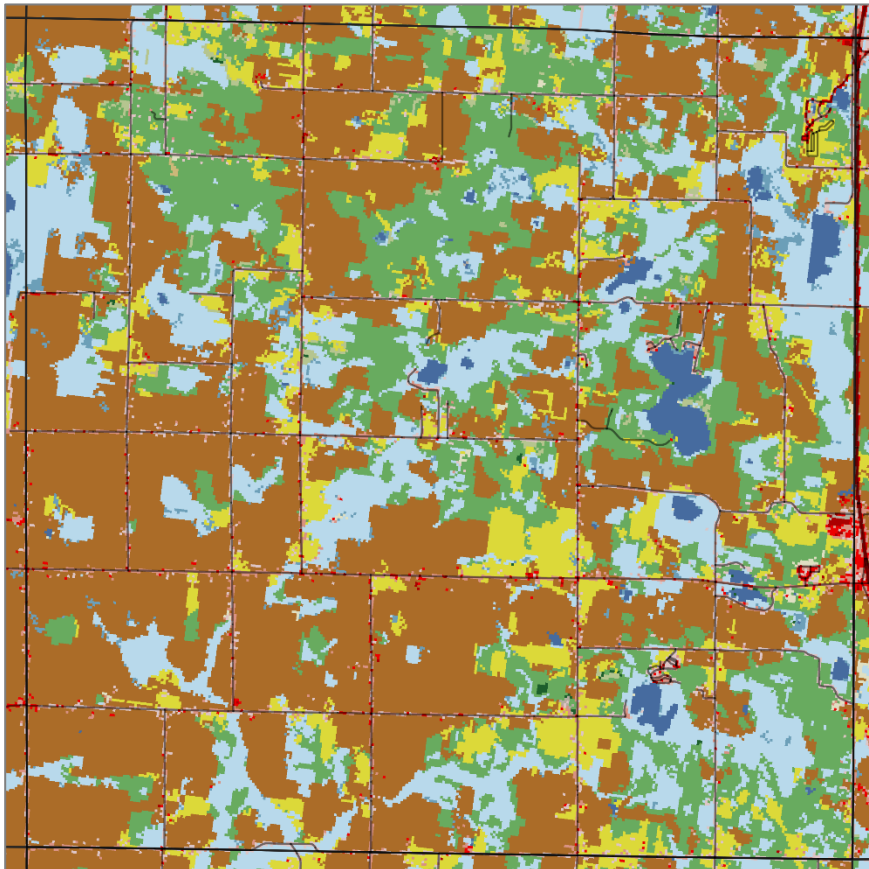
Watson Township

2001 NLCD LAND COVERAGE MAP

Land Coverage Value	% of Section (as measured)	Acreage (as measured using NLCD data)
11 - Open Water	1.60%	470.14
21 - Developed, Open Space	4.91%	1,444.23
22 - Developed, Low Intensity	3.02%	886.69
23 - Developed, Medium Intensity	0.52%	153.45
24 - Developed, High Intensity	0.03%	8.67
31 - Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay)	0.08%	23.13
41 - Deciduous Forest	18.52%	5,444.67
42 - Evergreen Forest	0.05%	15.57
43 - Mixed Forest	0.50%	146.34
52 - Shrub/Scrub	0.03%	10.23
71 - Grassland/Herbaceous	0.09%	26.91
81 - Pasture/Hay	9.07%	2,665.84
82 - Cultivated Crops	43.61%	12,820.83
90 - Woody Wetlands	16.34%	4,805.06
95 - Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	1.63%	478.15
TOTAL:	100%	29,399.91



Source: NLCD, U.S. Geological Survey



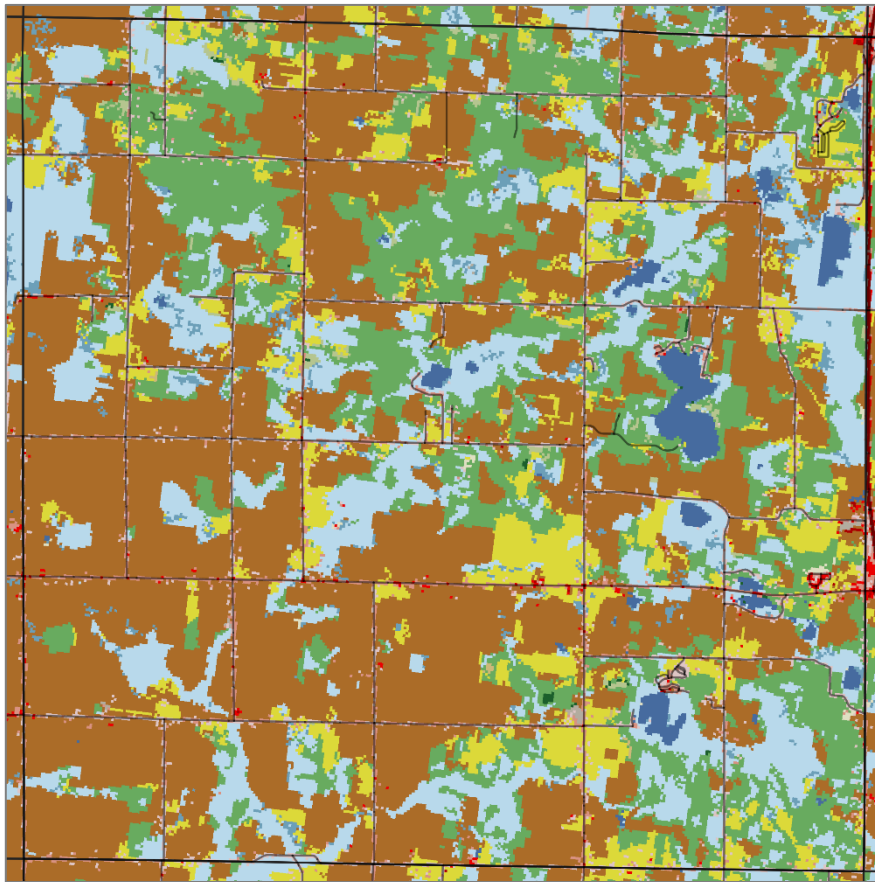
Watson Township

2008 NLCD LAND COVERAGE MAP

Land Coverage Value	% of Section (as measured)	Acreage (as measured using NLCD data)
11 - Open Water	1.65%	485.27
21 - Developed, Open Space	4.86%	1,428.89
22 - Developed, Low Intensity	3.07%	902.03
23 - Developed, Medium Intensity	0.63%	185.25
24 - Developed, High Intensity	0.04%	10.90
31 - Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay)	0.08%	23.80
41 - Deciduous Forest	18.53%	5,449.11
42 - Evergreen Forest	0.05%	15.57
43 - Mixed Forest	0.51%	149.45
52 - Shrub/Scrub	0.03%	8.45
71 - Grassland/Herbaceous	0.09%	15.58
81 - Pasture/Hay	8.89%	2,612.69
82 - Cultivated Crops	43.63%	12,826.83
90 - Woody Wetlands	16.72%	4,914.48
95 - Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	1.23%	361.61
TOTAL:	100%	29,400

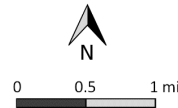


Source: NLCD, U.S. Geological Survey



Watson Township
2019 NLCD LAND COVERAGE MAP

Land Coverage Value	% of Section (as measured)	Acreage (as measured using NLCD data)
11 - Open Water	1.62%	475.48
21 - Developed, Open Space	4.58%	1,345.71
22 - Developed, Low Intensity	3.12%	918.05
23 - Developed, Medium Intensity	0.88%	259.31
24 - Developed, High Intensity	0.07%	21.57
31 - Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay)	0.04%	10.90
41 - Deciduous Forest	18.54%	5,451.12
42 - Evergreen Forest	0.07%	20.02
43 - Mixed Forest	0.49%	145.22
52 - Shrub/Scrub	0.03%	10.01
71 - Grassland/Herbaceous	0.16%	47.81
81 - Pasture/Hay	8.88%	2,610.47
82 - Cultivated Crops	43.49%	12,782.58
90 - Woody Wetlands	16.82%	4,944.28
95 - Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	1.20%	352.50
TOTAL:	100%	29,395



Source: NLCD, U.S. Geological Survey

Despite the scope of these maps and acreages involved, data concerning the amount of development between these years can still be found. Counterintuitively, open space development declined by 0.05% from 2001 to 2008 and by another 0.01% by 2019. However, much of the Township's proportion of this value is made up of County roads. When new development happens close enough to these roads to fall into the same 900-square-meter raster pixel, the unit can be converted away from open space and marked as a loss. This decline is equaled, though, when the same pixel is converted to another development value.

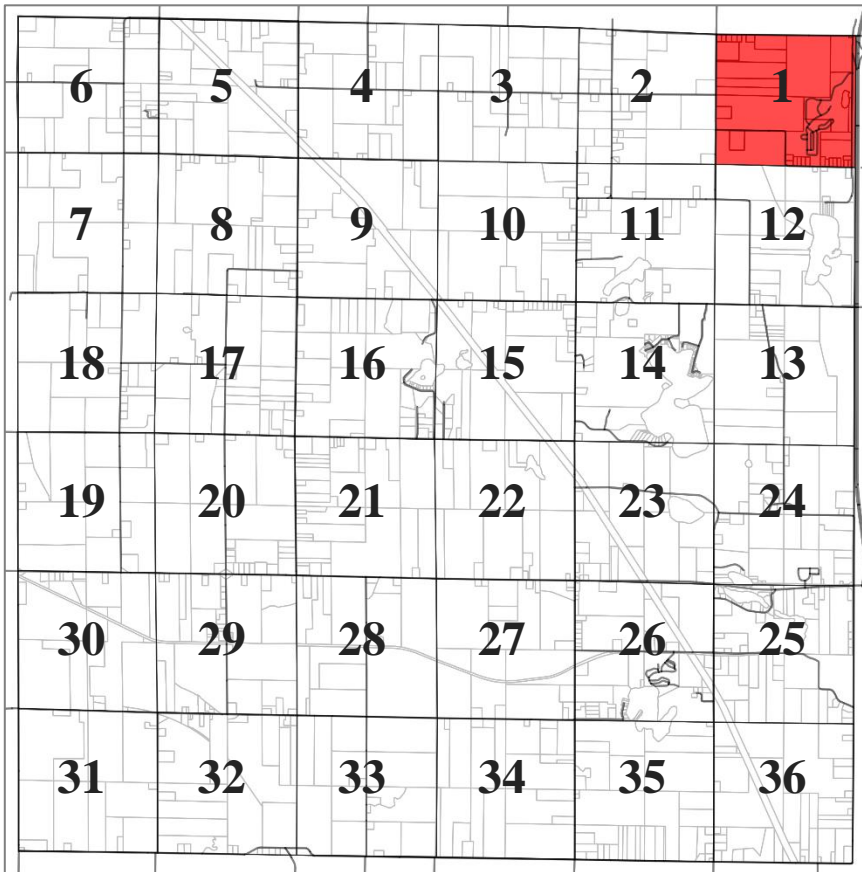
This is seen in the 0.05%, 0.11%, and 0.01% increases in low, medium, and high intensity development, respectively, from 2001 to 2008 and subsequent 0.05%, 0.25%, and 0.03% increases from 2008 to 2019, likewise. The increase in development is inversely mirrored by the slight declines seen in pasture/hay land and cultivated crops. From 2001 to 2008, pasture/hay land decreased by 0.18% while cultivated crops actually rose by 0.02%; By 2019, however, both land values had declined by 0.01% and 0.14%, respectively.

The figures found on the following page demonstrate development patterns by Township section for the two established timeframes above.

Within Watson Township the largest and most intensive area of residential development is found in Section 24 in the Country Meadows Mobile Home Park. This mobile home park contains approximately 60 mobile home sites and comprises roughly 40 acres. Other concentrations of homes are found on the west side of School Section Lake, on the north end of Big Lake, on the north end of Miller Lake and on the west side of Schnable Lake. Collectively, the settlements located on these lakes represent approximately 60 acres of land.

Throughout the remainder of the Township, residential development has occurred in a scattered fashion along existing roadways. This has resulted in a noticeable lineal pattern of residential growth, especially along M-222, 16th, and 20th Streets.

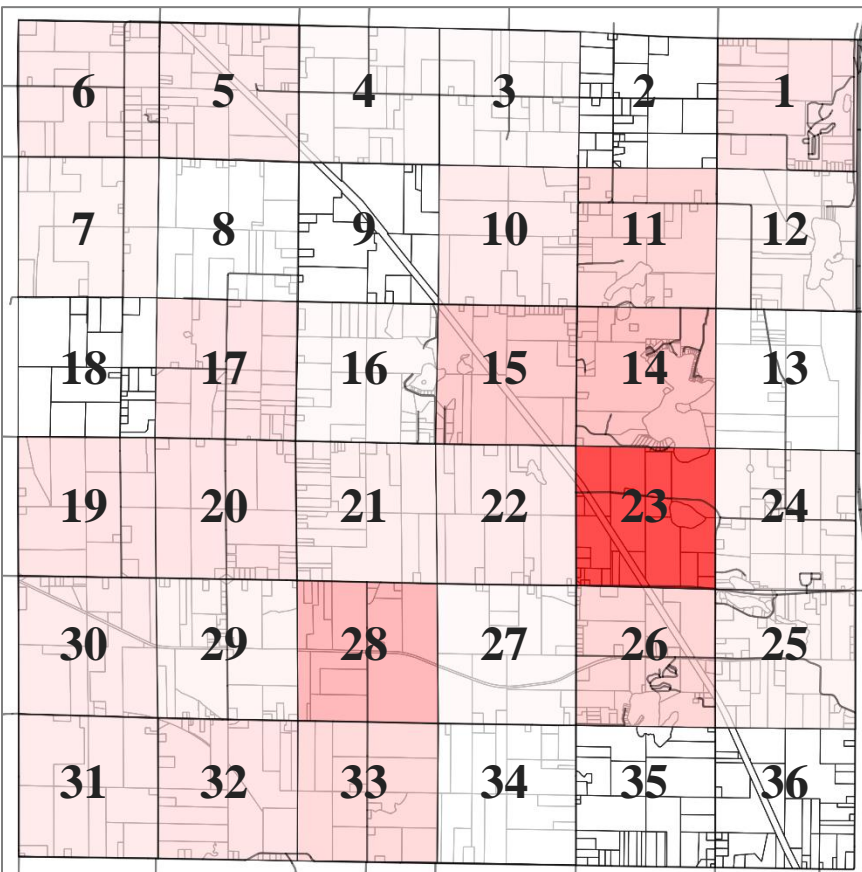
Being that Watson Township is very rural in character, residential land uses comprise a relatively small percentage of the Township's total land area. It is estimated that the Township's roughly 750 dwelling units occupy roughly 1,400 acres of land or less than 6% of the Township's total area. On average just less than 2.0 acres of land is estimated to be devoted to each residence.



Watson Township
2001 – 2008 GROSS DEVELOPMENT MAP

Sorted by Section		
Section	% of Gross Development	Acreage
1	1.21%	354.83
2	0.11%	33.22
3	0.08%	24.10
4	0.14%	40.83
5	0.33%	98.00
6	0.20%	58.14
7	0.19%	56.23
8	0.16%	46.64
9	0.16%	48.20
10	0.16%	48.20
11	0.16%	48.20
12	0.13%	38.87
13	0.05%	16.07
14	0.22%	64.26
15	0.35%	102.71
16	0.19%	54.42
17	0.23%	68.83
18	0.17%	49.01
19	0.31%	89.86
20	0.16%	46.64
21	0.19%	54.42
22	0.14%	40.16
23	0.30%	86.94
24	0.08%	24.50
25	0.08%	24.50
26	0.16%	48.20
27	0.11%	32.68
28	0.16%	46.64
29	0.16%	46.64
30	0.22%	65.35
31	0.22%	63.23
32	0.13%	38.87
33	0.13%	39.51
34	0.03%	8.17
35	0.11%	32.13
36	0.14%	40.16

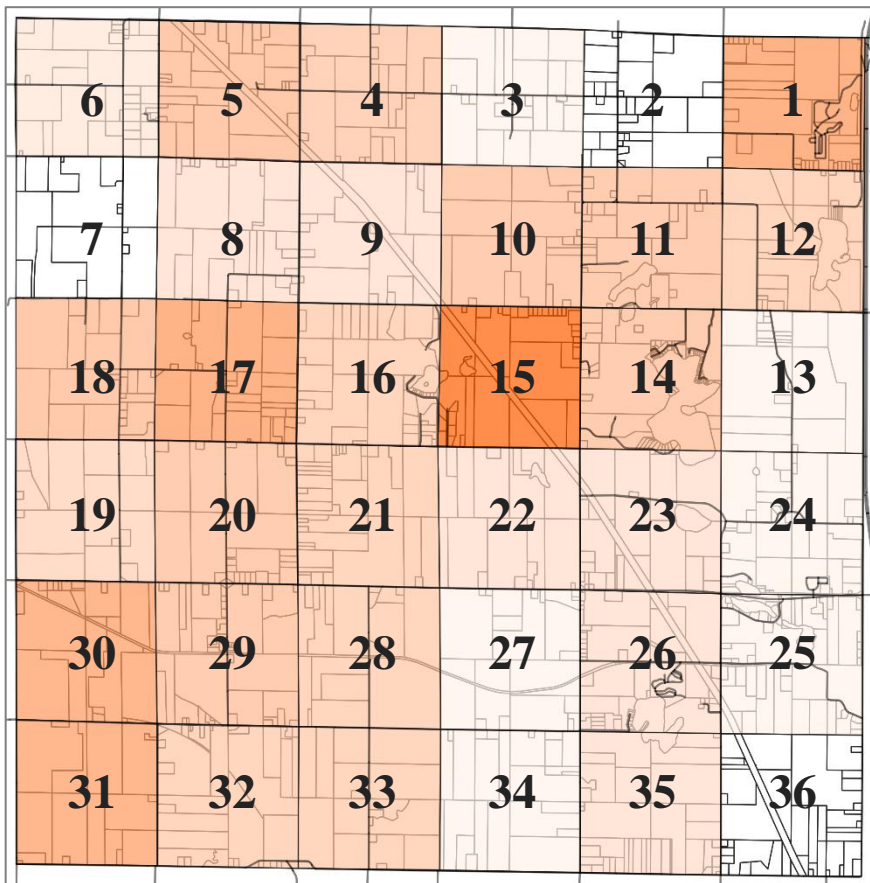
Sorted by Development Percentage		
Section	% of Gross Development	Acreage
1	1.21%	354.83
15	0.35%	102.71
5	0.33%	98.00
19	0.31%	89.86
23	0.30%	86.94
17	0.23%	68.83
30	0.22%	65.35
14	0.22%	64.26
31	0.22%	63.23
6	0.20%	58.14
7	0.19%	56.23
16	0.19%	54.42
21	0.19%	54.42
18	0.17%	49.01
9	0.16%	48.20
10	0.16%	48.20
11	0.16%	48.20
26	0.16%	48.20
8	0.16%	46.64
20	0.16%	46.64
28	0.16%	46.64
29	0.16%	46.64
4	0.14%	40.83
22	0.14%	40.16
36	0.14%	40.16
33	0.13%	39.51
12	0.13%	38.87
32	0.13%	38.87
2	0.11%	33.22
27	0.11%	32.68
35	0.11%	32.13
24	0.08%	24.50
25	0.08%	24.50
3	0.08%	24.10
13	0.05%	16.07
34	0.03%	8.17



Watson Township
2008 – 2019 GROSS DEVELOPMENT MAP

Sorted by Section		
Section	% of Gross Development	Acreage
1	0.43%	126.70
2	0.00%	0.00
3	0.22%	64.25
4	0.22%	65.32
5	0.36%	106.15
6	0.37%	107.95
7	0.27%	80.31
8	0.16%	46.63
9	0.14%	40.16
10	0.36%	104.41
11	0.55%	160.63
12	0.29%	85.50
13	0.16%	48.19
14	0.71%	208.82
15	0.62%	181.69
16	0.21%	62.18
17	0.42%	122.35
18	0.14%	40.84
19	0.39%	115.05
20	0.42%	124.36
21	0.32%	93.27
22	0.36%	104.41
23	1.85%	545.23
24	0.28%	81.65
25	0.28%	81.65
26	0.55%	160.63
27	0.25%	73.51
28	0.82%	240.94
29	0.26%	77.72
30	0.36%	106.18
31	0.38%	110.63
32	0.40%	116.59
33	0.51%	150.10
34	0.17%	49.01
35	0.14%	40.16
36	0.08%	24.09

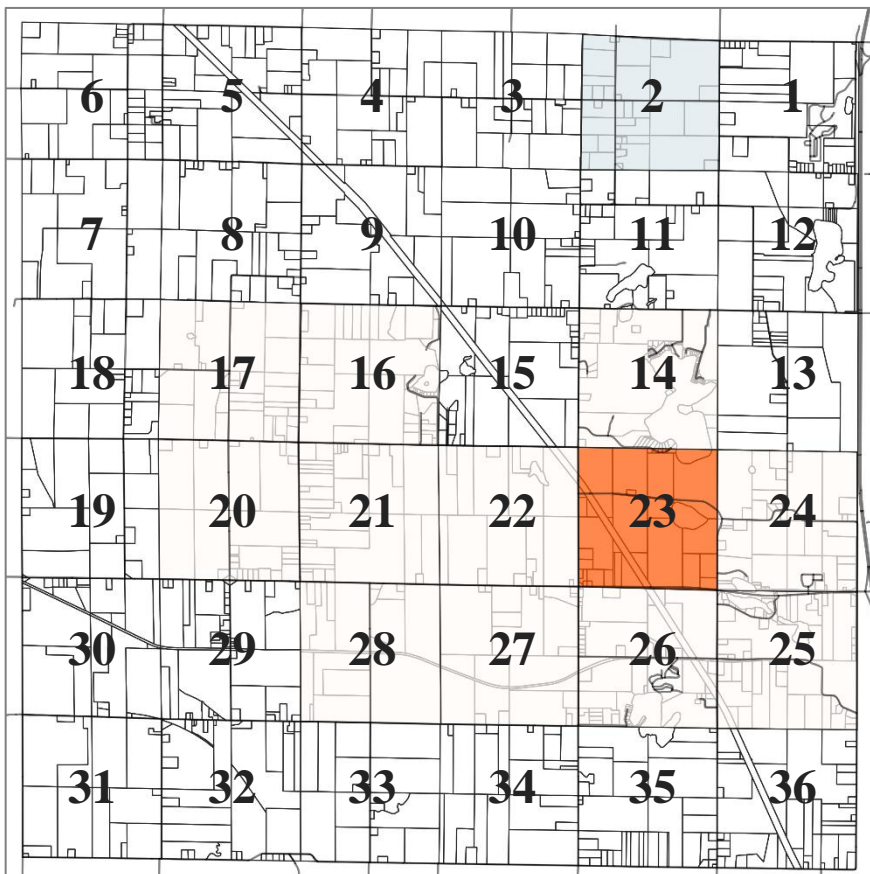
Sorted by Development Percentage		
Section	% of Gross Development	Acreage
23	1.85%	545.23
28	0.82%	240.94
14	0.71%	208.82
15	0.62%	181.69
26	0.55%	160.63
11	0.55%	160.63
33	0.51%	150.10
1	0.43%	126.70
20	0.42%	124.36
17	0.42%	122.35
32	0.40%	116.59
19	0.39%	115.05
31	0.38%	110.63
6	0.37%	107.95
30	0.36%	106.18
5	0.36%	106.15
10	0.36%	104.41
22	0.36%	104.41
21	0.32%	93.27
12	0.29%	85.50
24	0.28%	81.65
25	0.28%	81.65
7	0.27%	80.31
29	0.26%	77.72
27	0.25%	73.51
4	0.22%	65.32
3	0.22%	64.25
16	0.21%	62.18
34	0.17%	49.01
13	0.16%	48.19
8	0.16%	46.63
18	0.14%	40.84
9	0.14%	40.16
35	0.14%	40.16
36	0.08%	24.09
2	0.00%	0.00



Watson Township
2001 – 2008 NET DEVELOPMENT MAP

Sorted by Section		
Section	% of Net Development	Acreage
1	0.23%	67.59
2	0.00%	0.00
3	0.03%	8.03
4	0.14%	40.83
5	0.17%	49.00
6	0.06%	16.61
7	0.00%	0.00
8	0.08%	23.32
9	0.08%	24.10
10	0.16%	48.20
11	0.16%	48.20
12	0.13%	38.87
13	0.03%	8.03
14	0.16%	48.20
15	0.35%	102.71
16	0.13%	38.87
17	0.23%	68.83
18	0.17%	49.01
19	0.11%	32.68
20	0.16%	46.64
21	0.13%	38.87
22	0.08%	24.10
23	0.08%	23.71
24	0.03%	8.17
25	0.03%	8.17
26	0.08%	24.10
27	0.03%	8.17
28	0.13%	38.87
29	0.16%	46.64
30	0.22%	65.35
31	0.22%	63.23
32	0.13%	38.87
33	0.13%	39.51
34	0.03%	8.17
35	0.08%	24.10
36	0.00%	0.00

Sorted by Development Percentage		
Section	% of Net Development	Acreage
15	0.35%	102.71
17	0.23%	68.83
1	0.23%	67.59
30	0.22%	65.35
31	0.22%	63.23
18	0.17%	49.01
5	0.17%	49.00
10	0.16%	48.20
11	0.16%	48.20
14	0.16%	48.20
20	0.16%	46.64
29	0.16%	46.64
4	0.14%	40.83
33	0.13%	39.51
12	0.13%	38.87
16	0.13%	38.87
21	0.13%	38.87
28	0.13%	38.87
32	0.13%	38.87
19	0.11%	32.68
9	0.08%	24.10
22	0.08%	24.10
26	0.08%	24.10
35	0.08%	24.10
23	0.08%	23.71
8	0.08%	23.32
6	0.06%	16.61
34	0.03%	8.17
27	0.03%	8.17
24	0.03%	8.17
25	0.03%	8.17
3	0.03%	8.03
13	0.03%	8.03
2	0.00%	0.00
7	0.00%	0.00
36	0.00%	0.00



Watson Township
2008 – 2019 NET DEVELOPMENT MAP

Sorted by Section		
Section	% of Net Development	Acreage
1	0.00%	0.00
2	-0.23%	-66.43
3	0.00%	0.00
4	0.00%	0.00
5	0.00%	0.00
6	0.00%	0.00
7	0.00%	0.00
8	0.00%	0.00
9	0.00%	0.00
10	0.00%	0.00
11	0.00%	0.00
12	0.00%	0.00
13	0.00%	0.00
14	0.03%	8.03
15	0.00%	0.00
16	0.05%	15.54
17	0.05%	15.29
18	0.00%	0.00
19	0.00%	0.00
20	0.05%	15.54
21	0.13%	38.86
22	0.03%	8.03
23	1.80%	529.43
24	0.03%	8.17
25	0.03%	8.17
26	0.03%	8.03
27	0.03%	8.17
28	0.08%	23.32
29	0.00%	0.00
30	0.00%	0.00
31	0.00%	0.00
32	0.00%	0.00
33	0.00%	0.00
34	0.00%	0.00
35	0.00%	0.00
36	0.00%	0.00

Sorted by Development Percentage		
Section	% of Net Development	Acreage
23	1.80%	529.43
21	0.13%	38.86
28	0.08%	23.32
16	0.05%	15.54
20	0.05%	15.54
17	0.05%	15.29
27	0.03%	8.17
24	0.03%	8.17
25	0.03%	8.17
22	0.03%	8.03
26	0.03%	8.03
14	0.03%	8.03
18	0.00%	0.00
1	0.00%	0.00
3	0.00%	0.00
4	0.00%	0.00
5	0.00%	0.00
6	0.00%	0.00
7	0.00%	0.00
8	0.00%	0.00
9	0.00%	0.00
10	0.00%	0.00
11	0.00%	0.00
12	0.00%	0.00
13	0.00%	0.00
15	0.00%	0.00
19	0.00%	0.00
29	0.00%	0.00
30	0.00%	0.00
31	0.00%	0.00
33	0.00%	0.00
34	0.00%	0.00
35	0.00%	0.00
36	0.00%	0.00
32	0.00%	0.00
2	-0.23%	-66.43

From 2001 to 2008, the only section of the Township that saw any significant amount of gross development was Section 1, which contains the 124th Avenue/US-131 access point and Sun Retreats Gun Lake RV campground at approximately 1.21% of all section area being converted; All other sections experienced negligible amounts of conversion. This highly concentrated development pattern contrasts sharply with the distribution seen from 2008 to 2019, whereby several sections such as 14, 15, 23, and 28 all saw significant amounts of gross development at 0.71%, 0.62%, 1.85%, 0.82%, respectively. These sections all comprise parts of Township's interior, representing change happening largely around M-222 and the area's various lakes. However, noticeable percentages can likewise be seen in many edge sections along each border of the Township, suggesting that development pressure has been mounting from several sides.

While gross development represents all conversion of space from one NLCD development value to another, including upgrades in status of existing development to higher or lower intensities, net development reveals how much of this gross development is from non-development values to development values, thereby identifying how much greenspace has been converted to a development value.

Contrary to the seemingly skewed distribution of gross density seen between 2001 and 2008, much of the development around the rest of the Township had notable amounts of greenspace conversion. This metric is comparatively spread throughout the Township, but with significant high points in Sections 1, 15, 30, and 31 at 0.23%, 0.35%, 0.22%, and 0.22%, respectively. Counterintuitively, however, between 2008 and 2019, there was significantly less net development throughout the Township, but with a leading spike of 1.80% in Section 23, paralleling the 2008 – 2019 gross development pattern. Most counterintuitively, though, is Section 2 in this period, which actually saw an approximate -0.23% decrease of development, suggesting a return of some developed land to another value in this Section.

A further analysis of land used for residential purposes reveals the following:

1. Platted subdivisions are found primarily around the small lakes. There have been no new plats in over 20 years. The platted areas total approximately 100 lots and roughly 45 acres of land. Of the platted lots, roughly one half have been built on. Parcel sizes are in the 6,000 to 15,000 square foot range. Single family homes on platted lots consist of approximately 7 percent of the total number of homes. Many of these homes were originally developed as seasonal cottage type, dwellings. Since the 1990's a number of

seasonal homes have been converted or replaced by larger, full-time residences. Also, since the mid 1990's, a number of small private road and site condominium developments have occurred in areas of the township both in association with the lake fronts and elsewhere. As a result, while the lakefront developments remain the most prevalent form of neighborhood development, they are no longer the only form of rural neighborhood development in the Township.

2. Most homes are still situated on parcels of property that are within the range of 1 to 5 acres. In addition, there are many homes situated on parcels that are of a size of 5 to 10 acres. It is estimated that these homes collectively consume nearly 1200 acres of land. The vast majority of land consumed by these residences is wooded or otherwise unimproved. Typically, only a small portion of each parcel is actually devoted to residential purposes.
3. There are between 260 and 275 home sites located on large parcels (ten acres or more) of property. Most of these are "farmstead" residences situated on large holdings of contiguous land.

Chapter 3

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND POPULATION PROFILE

As the number of people living in Watson Township increases over time, the need for local community services and infrastructure improvements will also increase. Below are brief descriptions of the community facilities and infrastructure that presently serves residents and businesses in the Township.

Township Hall

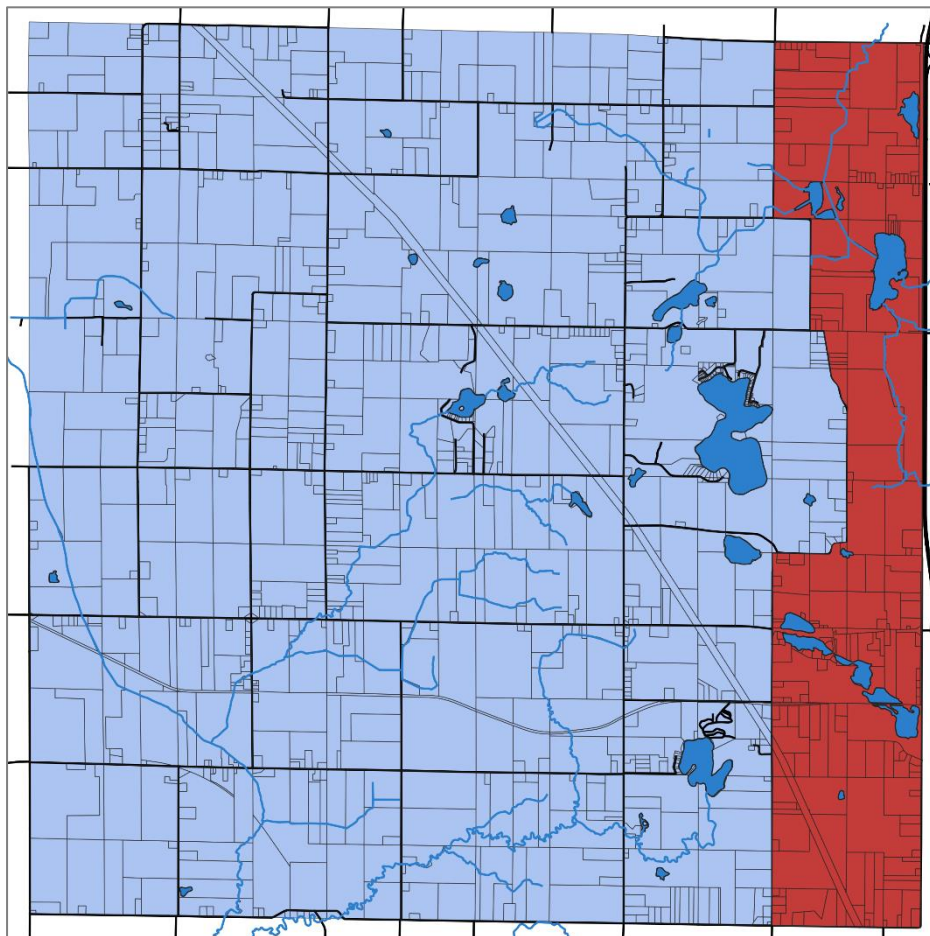
The Township Hall is a focal point within the community. It is located on 118th Avenue, approximately ½ mile east of 20th Street. Contained within the hall is an office area, meeting space with a capacity for approximately 50 persons, and kitchen facilities. The Township Fire Department is also housed on this site. It is anticipated that the existing Township Hall will provide adequate capacity for Township administrative, and fire needs in the foreseeable future.

At the present time there are no library facilities located in the Township. Residents must rely on facilities located in Hopkins, Allegan, Martin and Otsego.

Fire and Police Service

As shown on the Fire District Map, the Township is served by two adjacent fire districts that collectively provide fire protection for all of Watson. They include the Hopkins Area Fire District based out of Hopkins to the north and the Martin Fire District based to the east. Some fire apparatus for the Hopkins District is based at the fire barn attached to the Township Hall on 118th Street, which has recently undergone a renovation and expansion to fit the growing number of response calls in the District. The map on the following page illustrates the service areas of each fire district. The Township is also covered by mutual aid agreements with other nearby fire departments.

General police protection for Watson is provided by the Allegan County Sheriff's Department, which operates out of the City of Allegan, 4 miles to the west. There is also a Michigan State Police post located in the City of Wayland, approximately 6 miles to the north. Allegan County maintains a "911" emergency notification system for county residents. All portions of Watson Township are connected to the system.



Watson Township Fire District Coverage 2022

LEGEND

Section Boundaries

Fire Districts

Hopkins Area Fire Department

Martin Fire Department

Cemeteries

The Township continues to operate and maintain two cemeteries. One is located on 20th Street, south of 118th Avenue. The other is located at 117th Avenue and 14th Street.

Utilities

There are no public sewer or public water utilities serving the township and Watson Township is not under agreement that would enable utilities to be extended into its jurisdiction. The nearest utilities are located in Martin Township where sanitary sewer has been extended to serve the U.S.-131 Motor Sports Park off 12th Street.

Recreational Opportunities

As of the date of this Master Plan, the Township is currently in the process of establishing its first park. The property comprises 30 acres of mixed forestry and grasslands and a small portion of the School Section Brook. Amenities are yet to be determined at this time, but may include ball fields,

picnic tables and benches, gazebos, etc.

Public fishing access is provided on Big Lake and nearby Miner Lake. The largest land area devoted to private recreational use include the campgrounds located on Miller Lake and Schnable Lake, and the Hidden Ridge RV Park in Section 1, off 12th Street.








Other nearby recreation facilities include athletic and playground facilities located at public school in Hopkins and Martin, and the Martin-US-131 Motor Sports Park on 12th Street., south of M-222 in Martin Township. At present, there are no schools within the boundaries of the Township.

Road System

The road network in Watson Township is laid out in a modified grid formation and contains the typical hierarchy of State highway, primary and local roads. The grid system provides a range of alternative routes throughout the Township and although the Township's numerous lakes have caused the true grid pattern to be disrupted, the street pattern effectively diffuses most local traffic. The Township's major east-west thoroughfare is M-222 connecting Watson to U.S.-131 and the City of Allegan. Most local roads are fully improved; however, a number of unpaved road segments exist throughout the Township. U.S.-131 passes along the eastern edge of the Township providing easy access to the larger metropolitan areas of Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids but never entering the township's boundaries.

The following table provides estimated 24-hour traffic counts at select locations for eleven previous years. The counts were taken by both the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Allegan County Road Commission (ACRC). The consistently highest traffic corridor in the Township is M-222, spanning from US-131 to the east out of the Township toward Allegan to the west. On the local roads the highest volumes are found on 16th Street north of the Township line and 20th Street south of 122nd Avenue. The 24-hour counts on local corridors fall well below the generally accepted capacity of 15,000 to 20,000 vehicles for a two-lane paved road. Even if traffic increases at a rate of one percent each year, however, as is a normal rate of increase per the ACRC, traffic counts are likely to remain far from reaching said capacities on any of the local road segments in the foreseeable future. The need for ongoing maintenance and periodic resurfacing of the roads should be anticipated, however.

Table 1
Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT), Two Way, in Watson Township

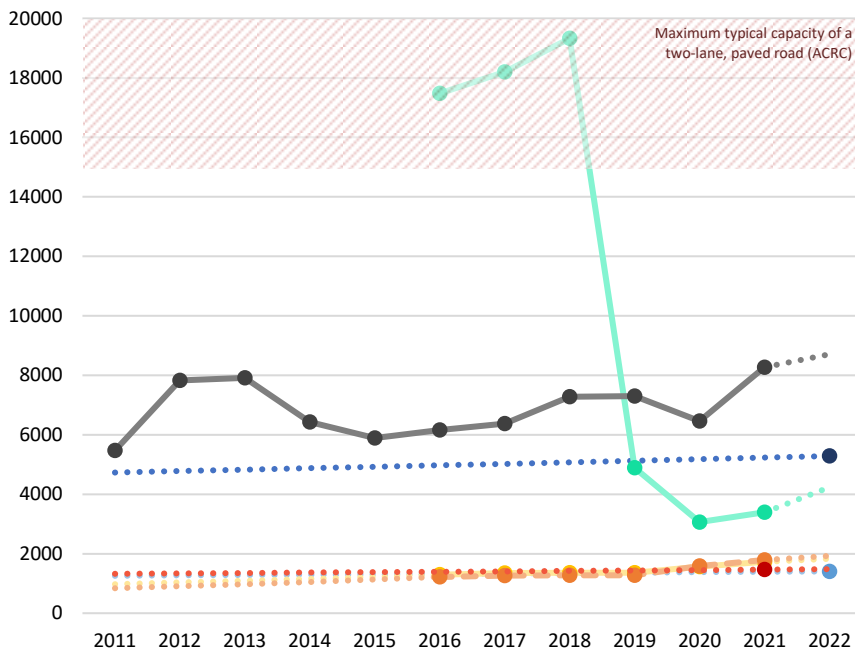
Street Segment	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
 12th St., north of M-222	1,257	1,270	1,283	1,296	1,309	1,322	1,336	1,349	1,363	1,377	1,390	1,405
 12th St., south of M-222	4,730	4,777	4,826	4,874	4,924	4,973	5,024	5,074	5,126	5,177	5,230	5,283*
 16th St., South of 112th Ave.	-	-	-	-	-	17,482	18,199	19,326 [†]	4,890	3,065	3,389	4,235
 20th St., south of 124th Ave.	976	1,033	1,093	1,156	1,224	1,217	1,267	1,276	1,279	1,587	1,755	1,829
 24th St., north of M-222	840	905	974	1,049	1,130	1,295	1,348	1,357	1,360	1,564	1,791	1,928
 24th St., south of M-222	1,326	1,340	1,353	1,367	1,381	1,395	1,409	1,423	1,437	1,452	1,467	1,481
 M-222, east of 24th St.	5,470	7,830	7,916	6,430	5,893	6,158	6,374	7,283	7,298	6,459	8,272	8,707

Source: Michigan Department of Transportation, 2022

LEGEND

Black Text: Data as measured by MDOT and the Allegan County Road Commission (ACRC)








Pink text: Extrapolations based on established trends among measured data.



Source: Michigan Department of Transportation, 2022

LEGEND

Measured

-  12th Street, north of M-222
-  12th Street, south of M-222
-  16th Street, south of 112th Avenue
-  20th Street, south of 124th Avenue
-  24th Street, north of M-222
-  24th Street, south of M-222
-  M-222, east of 24th Street

Extrapolated



Figure 1
AADT, Graphed and Mapped



*Measured 2022 traffic count stated by ACRC to be likely inflated by special event held at US-131 Motorsports Park south of M-222 on 12th Street.

†2016 – 2018 data suspected to be abnormally inflated due to construction or other such cause for detour temporarily rerouting traffic through 16th Street. Due to such outliers, 2022 extrapolated data is based only on data gathered for years 2019 – 2021, while extrapolated date for years 2011 – 2015 is omitted due to the inability to provide a reliable estimate of AADT.

For planning purposes, it is useful to recognize that various roads within Watson Township serve different functions. An understanding of these functions can lead to decisions as to the desirable use of each road segment, road right-of-way widths, and adjoining land uses. The layout of the Township's road pattern can be readily identified on the preceding Township Base map. Below is a brief description of four road types which are important to Watson Township.

Limited Access Highway

These facilities are devoted entirely to the movement of large volumes of traffic over high speeds over relatively long distances. These roads provide little or no direct access to individual properties adjoining these roads. U.S.-131 is an example and because of U.S.-131 Watson Township is within a reasonable commute to jobs within West Michigan making it an attractive place to live.

Major Arterial Roads (State Highways and County Primaries)

The major function of these roads is to move a good volume of traffic within and through an area. A secondary function is to provide access to adjacent land areas. In Watson Township, these roads include M-222 and the county primary roads—20th Street and 16th Street south of 118th Avenue.

Minor Arterial Roads (County Locals)

These roads provide for internal traffic movement within a community and connect these local land areas with the major arterial road system. Providing direct access to adjacent properties is also an important function of these roads. The majority of the roads in Watson now fall under this classification. However, over time, as development in the Township increases, traffic volumes along minor arterial roads will also increase. Some minor arterial roads may eventually become major roads.

Local Roads

The sole function of local roads is to provide access to adjoining properties. In many cases, thru-traffic is discouraged. Examples of such roads in Watson Township are found around several of the lakes located in the Township. Over time they will become more numerous as more subdivision development takes place. Private roads are also classified as local roads.

Population

The 2020 U.S. Decennial Census and 2020 5-Year American Community Survey provide the most recent population profiles of Watson Township and serve as the basis for the information presented in the following section. Previous U.S. Census Bureau population metrics such as the 2010 Decennial Census and various American Community Survey 5-Year and 1-Year Surveys are likewise used to illustrate changes in Township demographics and trends over the past several years that can help direct development matters moving forward.

Table 2 below illustrates population changes within the Township over the past fifty years. While growth

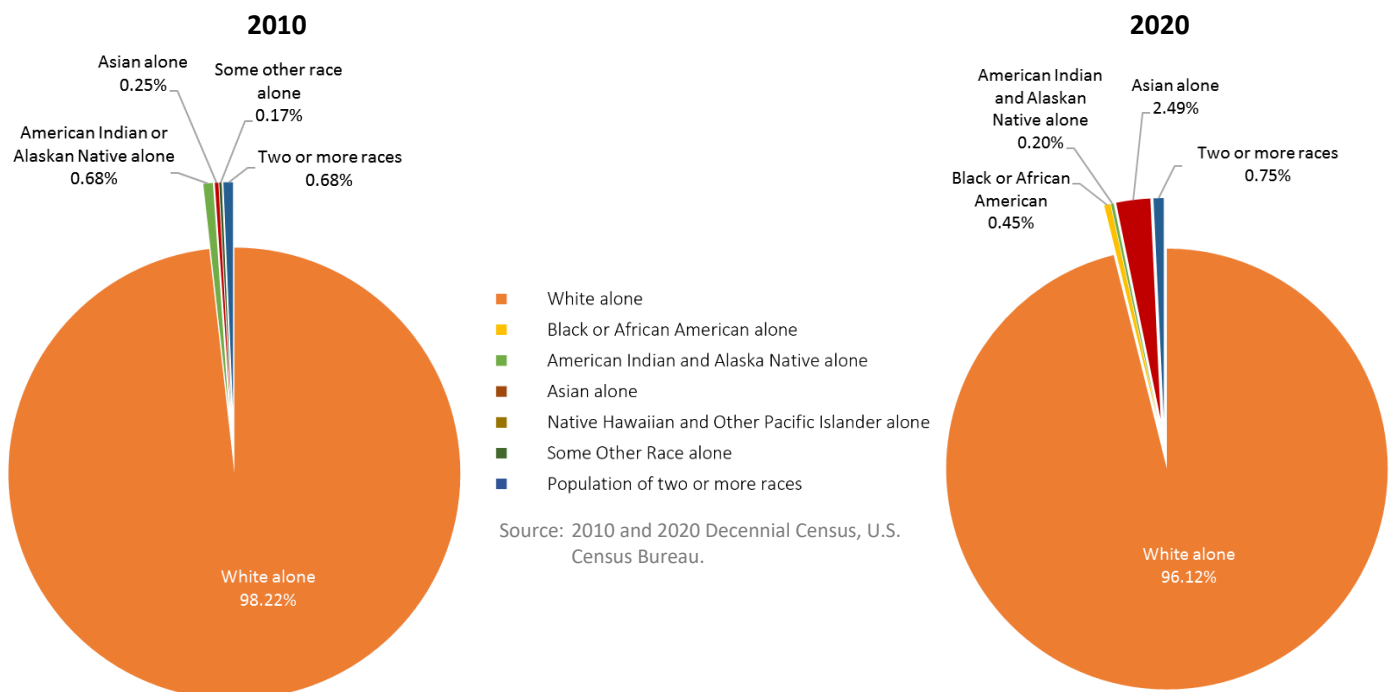
neared 25% between 1970 and 1980, this rate gradually declined until 2010, whereby a net population loss of one individual or approximately 0.05% composed the bottom of the trough, likely exacerbated by the 2008 housing crisis at the end of the decade. Since 2010, however, the Township has been witnessing a slow return to population growth at 5.5%, suggesting a recovery from a decades-long decline and a change in perspective on development regulations. As West Michigan grows, Watson Township is likely to accumulate some new residents seeking escape from the urban buildup of Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo.

Table 2. Total Population Growth

Decade	Population	Increase/Decrease	% per Decade
1970	1,331	-	-
1980	1,658	+327	24.57%
1990	1,897	+239	14.41%
2000	2,064	+167	8.80%
2010	2,063	-1	-0.05%
2020	2,176	+113	5.48%

Source: 2010 and 2020 U.S. Census Bureau and Michigan Information Center

Figure 2. Watson Township Population by Race, 2010 and 2020



Watson Township, like many rural Michigan Townships, has a largely white population, making up over ninety-six (96%) percent of the total population as of 2020 (96.12%). This percentage is down approximately 2.1% from 2010, indicating a slightly increased proportion of residents identifying as nonwhite during that time. All other nonwhite races make up either less than one percent or are entirely absent in both 2010 and 2020 with the exception of those identifying as Asian alone, which increased 2.24% in that time from just 0.25% in 2010 to 2.49% in 2020.

There were approximately 740 households in the Township in 2010. In 2020 the number of households increased to 758. The average household size was approximately 2.65 persons, slightly lower than the 2.88 persons per household in 2010. Likewise, the 2020 average family size was 2.86, down significantly from 3.22 in 2010. As of 2020, approximately 64% of the population 15 years and older was married, 12.8% separated, divorced, or widowed, and 23.4% never married.

Out of those persons 25 years and older in 2020, 48.2% had completed just four years of high school (or equivalent) while 29.2% had some college or an associate's degree and 15.6% had a college bachelor's degree or higher; Just 7.1% had less than a high school diploma or equivalent. By contrast, in 2010, 48.3% had completed just four years of high school (or equivalent) while 31.9% had some college or an associate's degree and 12.9% had a college bachelor's degree or higher; Just 6.9% had less than a high school diploma or equivalent. The high school education attainment rate in the Township (93.0%) is approximately two percentage points higher than the Allegan County as a whole (91.2%), but the bachelor's degree attainment level (15.6%) is approximately eight percent lower than the county average (23.6%).

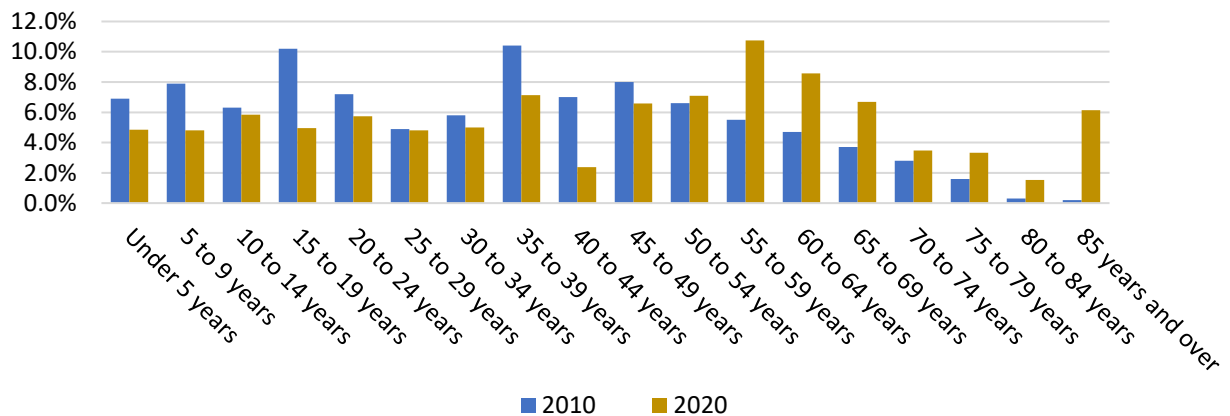
Analyzing age distribution over time can reveal the major and minor cohorts living, working, and using the general resources of their community. This metric can help local leadership determine such needs and amenities as the types of housing and recreational facilities required to suit the ages of those most likely to use them.

Figure 3 on the following page depicts the distribution of age within Watson Township in both 2010 and 2020. While neither year's distribution lends itself to a typical "pyramid" distribution, rough peaks and troughs can still be identified: The largest cohorts in 2010 were those aged 15 to 19 years and 35 to 39 years with an overall median of 35.3 years; The largest cohorts in 2020 were those aged 55 to 65 years and 85 years or older with an overall median of 47.7 years. Despite the nontraditional distributions, the most populous demographics have drastically shifted over the 2010s from young adults to senior citizens. In contrast, the Township's median age has jumped significantly above the

2020 Allegan County and State of Michigan averages at 40.2 and 39.8 years, respectively. These numbers represent a significant demographic stagnation within Watson Township over the last decade, suggesting that the near future will require greater attention to regulating and providing opportunities for aging citizen housing, accessibility, and amenities.

Taken together, the age statistics of Watson Township are now indicative of less demand for starter homes, and somewhat increased demand for empty nester housing and senior living opportunities. Often, the demand for empty nester housing in rural townships is filled in nearby villages and towns. Since Watson Township does not presently support a senior living /retirement housing facility, many in this age group are likely to move elsewhere. Coupled with a higher natural mortality rate, the result is a steep drop off in the relative population numbers between the mature family and retirement age groups with some life-long residents nonetheless remaining well past retirement age.

Figure 3. Watson Township Population by Age, 2010 and 2020



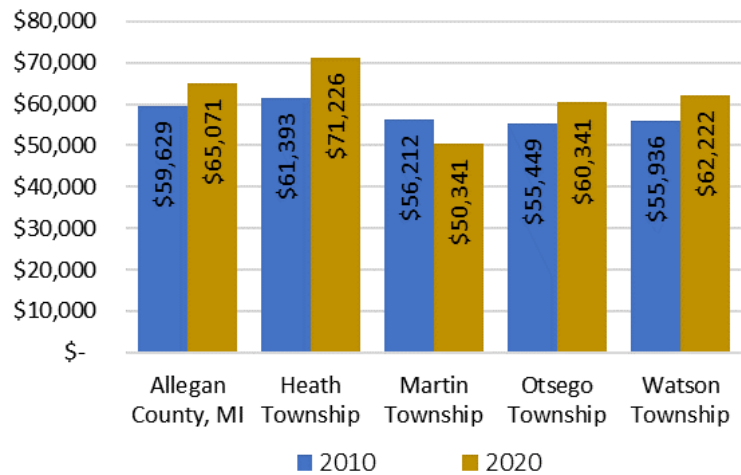
Source: 2010 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

Income

Median household income, per capita income, and person-below-poverty-level are traditionally used to measure the economic strength of an area. They are also helpful as indicators of disparities between communities and often are directly related to other factors such as educational attainment and occupational skill level. Income can also have land use implications. People with high incomes often invest more in their homes and generally have higher disposable income. These factors generally mean more support for nearby commercial activity, larger homes and more cars per family.

The 2020 per capita income for Watson Township was \$28,062 and the percentage of people living in poverty was 12.7%; In 2010, the per capita income for Watson Township was \$24,984 (in 2020 dollars) and the poverty level was 11.2%. For comparison, the per capita income and poverty level for Allegan County in 2020 was \$30,057 in 2020 and \$27,426 in 2010. In 2010 and 2020 the

Figure 4. Median Household Income in Watson Area Communities in 2020 Dollars, 2010 and 2020



Source: 2010 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

Allegan County poverty levels stood at 16.3% and 13.5%, respectively. The poverty figures for both the Township and Allegan County are several percentage points lower than state average, which stood at 13.7%, in 2020 and 16.8% in 2010.

Figure 4 above illustrates the median household incomes for Watson Township and surrounding communities in 2020-adjusted dollars for both 2010 and 2020. The Township is average among the surrounding communities and lies just several thousand dollars short of the County averages both in 2020 and in 2010.

Housing Characteristics

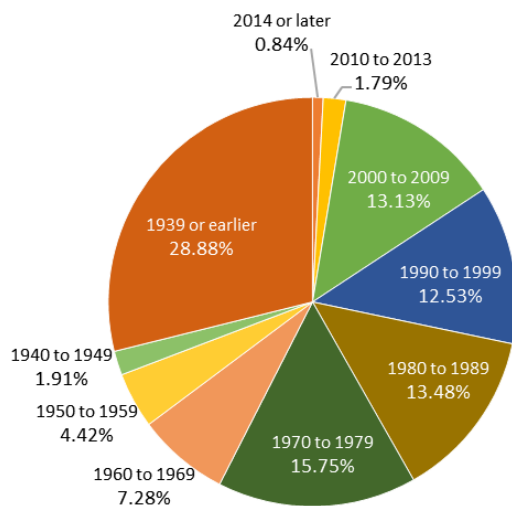
Watson Township had 852 housing units at the time of the 2020 Decennial Census, all of which rely on private, on-site well and septic systems (Figure 5). An estimated 246 dwellings in the Township built prior to 1939 (28.88%) still survive, making up the single largest age cohort for Township housing units. Surviving houses built between 1940 to 1969 comprise just approximately 114 dwellings or a combined 13.43% of all Township units, less than half of all units built before 1940. Surviving units are then steadily distributed between 1970 and 2009 at about thirteen (13%) percent per decade, making up about 467 total units and 54.89% of the total housing stock. Houses built after 2010 comprise only approximately 22 units or 2.63% of all dwellings, suggesting a marked decrease in development following the 2008 housing crisis.

Watson Township's housing stock distribution is indicative of a primarily rural, post-war developed area serving as a bedroom community for people employed in nearby towns and

metropolitan areas.

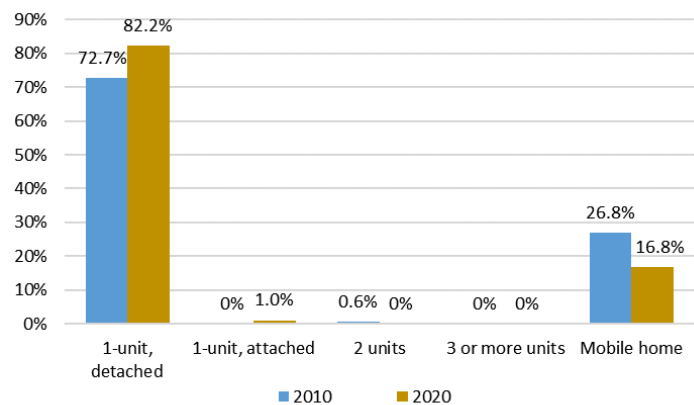
Figure 6 presents the Watson Township housing stock by unit type. In 2020, as in the past, most of the units (82.2%) were conventional single-family homes, with the second largest category being mobile homes (16.8%). These numbers are inversely related as demonstrated by the 2010 numbers. Based upon building permits and empirical observations there has been essentially no change in the mix of housing type since 2010 and most of the dwelling units constructed since 2010 have been site built single family homes. The 2010 and 2020 American Community Surveys suggest that there has been an approximate swap of 10% of the Township's housing units such that single-unit, detached homes increased by 9.5% and mobile homes decreased by 10.0%—possibly attributed to mobile homes ease of removability in lieu of new stick-built units. The remaining units (1.0%) are contained in two or multiple-family structures or are single-family units used for seasonal or migratory labor purposes.

Figure 5. Housing Stock by Year Built, 2020



Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 6. Housing Stock by Type, 2010 and 2020



Source: 2010 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

In 2020, 713 of the Township's 758 occupied housing units were owner-occupied (94.1%) and 45 units were renter-occupied (5.9%). These figures are all numerically lower than their 2010 equivalents, but proportionately comparable: 775 of the Township's 820 occupied units were owner-occupied (94.5%) and still just 45 were renter-occupied (5.5%). In 2020, only 69 of the total 852 units were vacant (8.1%) while in 2010, 81 of the total 821 units were vacant (9.9%), indicating a marked improvement over the past decade. Generally, overall vacancy rates

exceeding 5% begin to raise community stability as a concern; Rates exceeding 10% tend to correlate with communities experiencing problems of blight. For reference, the Allegan County vacancy rate was 12.1% in 2020 and 15.0% in 2010.

The median value of owner-occupied homes in 2020 was \$173,300 (2020 adjusted dollars). 22.9% of homes were valued at less than \$100,000; 16.3% percent between \$100,000 and \$149,999; 21.3% between \$150,000 and \$199,000, and 39.5% were over \$200,000. Among renters, the median monthly rent was \$627; Contrarily, in 2010 (2020 adjusted dollars), the median monthly rent was \$509, indicating a \$118 increase after adjusting for inflation.

One measure of a community's health is the ratio of owner- to renter-occupied homes. This ratio has gradually changed in the last decade within Watson Township from approximately 17:1 (owner:renter) in 2010 to 16:1 in 2020. Ratios of well over 3:1 are typical for predominately rural townships, but many suburban communities at least try to maintain a 3:1 or better ratio of owner-occupied to rental housing.

Over the years, Watson Township has continued to experience an increase in population per dwelling unit. In 1980, there was an average of 2.74 persons per dwelling unit, in 1990 it was 2.91, in 2000 it was 2.98 and in 2010, the average household size was 2.99. The upward trend runs counter to a noticeable trend nationwide toward smaller family units and increased numbers of empty nesters but is not unusual for rural areas such as Watson where, due to lack of housing variety, homes supporting families with children continue to dominate empty nester households.

Employment

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in 2020 there were 1,002 persons 16 years and over in the Watson Township labor force out of 1,661 (3.0% unemployment); These same metrics in 2010 comprised 1,248 persons of 1,798 aged 16 years and over (5.6% unemployment).

The 2020 census revealed that 83.6% of workers drive alone to work while just 10.8% carpool. The average commute time was 27.8 minutes—1.6 minutes longer than the 2010 average. Meanwhile, in 2020, just 1.2% walked to work and 2.8% worked from home while, in 2010, no workers reported walking and 4.9% worked from home, potentially influenced by the 2020 COVID-19 contact restrictions. These statistics reinforce the ongoing characterization of Watson Township as a *bedroom community* in which most residents travel moderate to long distances to work in other communities. The increase in number of people working from home is also a trend that, prior to the advent of COVID-19, was seen in many communities, both urban and rural,

where technology and e-commerce, coupled with the loss of manufacturing jobs, had both forced and facilitated self-employment through entrepreneurship; COVID-19 has likewise since popularized the model of typically employed individuals telecommuting to a company headquartered elsewhere.

Table 3 found on page 42 illustrates occupations broken down into U.S. Census Bureau categories for Watson Township, Allegan County, and the State of Michigan. Manufacturing is by far the largest single employment sector in the Township (25.6%), followed closely by educational and health care services (19.5%) and construction (10.1%). These placements are largely comparable to that of Allegan County, though retail trade comprises its third largest sector (9.8%) rather than construction. These same sectors, while also serving as leaders for the State overall, are not configured in the same way: Educational and healthcare services leads (23.4%) followed by manufacturing (18.6%) and retail trade (10.7%). Construction in Allegan County and the State comprises 8.0% and 5.5%, respectively. Watson Township also employs approximately 33% more agricultural and forestry employees (3.6%) than that of the County (2.6%) and 66% more than the State (1.1%).

Relatedly, over 26% of workers in 2020 fall into the occupational category of management, business, science and professional; 25.6% are in production and transportation; 18.0% are in sales and offices; 16.4% are in natural resources, construction, and maintenance; and 13.6% are in services.

Table 4 also on page 42 provides 2010, 2015, and 2020 region-wide employment numbers as well as forecasts to the year 2025; Forecasts are based on an average of previous intervals' percent changes. As of data collected in 2020, the industry forecasted to see the most growth is *professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services* at 28.70% (from 54 in 2020 to a forecasted 70 in 2025). This would reflect a larger regional trend whereby West Michigan moves away from manufacturing and into a more varied palate of information, management, and service industries. Other notable increases include *finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing* (28.57%), *educational services, and health care and social assistance* (26.54%), and *construction* (25.84%). So while manufacturing and other such employment in West Michigan is still expected to be significant, the most anticipated job growth in the upcoming years is to be in the professional and business services and in education and health sectors.

However, the Township is still forecasted to see more industry losses than gains in 2025. Most notably of these is *agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining*, forecasted to near zero in the coming years. While a total agricultural flatline is highly unlikely, the past decade suggests that more and more farmers are either switching careers, aging out of the occupation, or leaving the Township. Other notable decreases include *wholesale trade* (-63.33%), *arts, entertainment, and recreation*, and *accommodation and food services* (-47.22%), and *information* (-33.33%).

Table 3. Employment by Industry, 2020

Industry Sector	Watson Township		Allegan County	State of Michigan
	Employment	% employed in sector	% employed in sector	% employed in sector
<i>Full-time, year-round civilian employed population 16 years and over</i>	1,002			
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	36	3.6%	2.6%	1.1%
Construction	101	10.1%	8.0%	5.5%
Manufacturing	257	25.6%	25.7%	18.6%
Wholesale trade	15	1.5%	3.3%	2.4%
Retail trade	95	9.5%	9.8%	10.7%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	57	5.7%	4.1%	4.4%
Information	14	1.4%	0.9%	1.3%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	24	2.4%	3.4%	5.6%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	73	7.3%	7.7%	9.7%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	195	19.5%	17.7%	23.4%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	39	3.9%	8.7%	9.2%
Other services, except public administration	71	7.1%	6.2%	4.6%
Public administration	25	2.5%	2.0%	3.5%

Source: 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census, U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 4. Employment Forecast by Industry, 2010 — 2020

Industry Sector	Employment					
	2010	2015	2020	Forecast		
				2025	Increase in #	% change
<i>Full-time, year-round civilian employed population 16 years and over</i>	725	796	769	791	22	2.86%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	66	63	21	0	-21	-100%
Construction	43	74	89	112	23	25.84%
Manufacturing	301	214	237	205	-32	-13.50%
Wholesale trade	34	12	15	6	-10	-63.33%
Retail trade	56	78	53	52	-2	-2.83%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	32	42	54	65	11	20.37%
Information	5	6	3	2	-1	-33.33%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	9	17	21	27	6	28.57%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	23	76	54	70	16	28.70%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	61	92	130	165	35	26.54%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	35	24	18	10	-9	-47.22%
Other services, except public administration	36	45	49	56	7	13.27%
Public administration	24	53	25	26	1	2.00%

Source: 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census, 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

Chapter 4

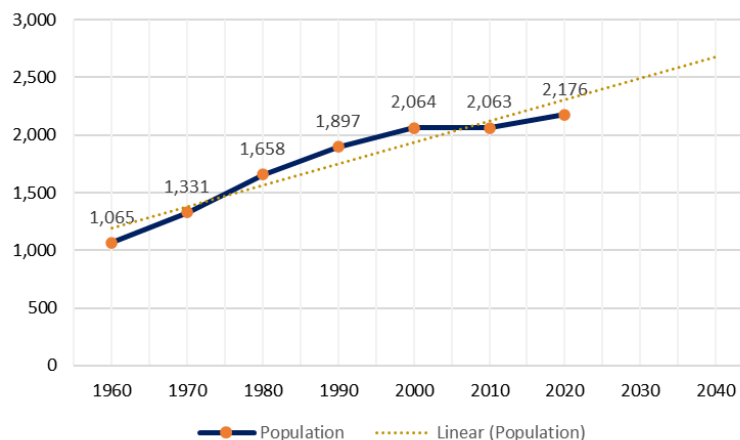
PLANNING ANALYSIS: POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

Population Trends and Projections

Population trends refer to the historical direction a community has followed in respect to its population counts while population projections refer to the direction a community is anticipated to follow in future years. The Township has followed a steadily increasing population trend over the past fifty years in reaching its current population. Figure 7 below shows that growth in the Township has been substantial and progressed at a steady pace between 1970 and the mid 2000, when population growth stopped. By 2010, the population had stagnated with the onset of the nationwide “great recession”. Empirical observations as well as recent building permit data shows that growth is once again occurring, but at a slow to moderate pace, compared to the growth experienced in the 90’s and early 2000’s.

The past economic downturn and the current recovery both underscore the fact that growth and development is often cyclical. Future growth and development projections must therefore consider both upturns and downturns in the economy. Historical growth trends over the last 20, 30 and 40 years will reflect those ups and downs and are useful as models on which to base future projections. Population projections are a bridge between the present and the future in the planning process and help to predict future land use requirements as well as the demand for various public services and capital improvements; Projections are essentially "guestimates" from which planning decisions are made.

Figure 7. Population Trends and Projections



Source: Decennial Census, U.S. Census Bureau

The projections made by the trend line in Figure 7 anticipate that over the next twenty-five years, the Township's population is likely to increase at a rate close to the average historical rate. In other words, the Township's population will continue to represent approximately the same proportion of the County's overall population in the future as it does today.

Specifically, if population growth continues at the historical average, the Township will likely be home to approximately 2,500 residents in 2030 and 2,680 in 2040. Actual growth will of course be dependent on regional, state and national economic conditions, but growth can be influenced by local land use and development policies, especially in terms of how it is allowed to impact an area.

The number of anticipated future housing units within a community can be determined by utilizing a statistical formula. By dividing the projected population by the current average number of persons per dwelling unit, a projected number of housing units for various years is obtained. Table 5 below presents projected total dwelling units based on the population projections found in Figure 7. The projection estimates that 159 new units will be needed to house the projected 2040 population. This would represent an 18.7% increase over the 20-year period.

Table 5
Dwelling Unit Projections, Watson Township

2020 average household size (occupied and unoccupied)	Dwelling Units					
	2010	2015	2020	2030	2040	Projected Increase from 2020 to 2040
2.65	821	847	852	943	1,011	159

Source: Data extrapolated from 2020 Decennial Census, U.S. Census Bureau

Converting the projected increase in dwelling units into raw land needs results in the following comparative estimates;

- 159 acres of land used at 1 dwelling per developable acre.
- 318 acres of land used at 0.5 units per acre (2 acre zoning).
- 79.5 acres of land used at 2 units per acre (20,000 Sf. Lots).

Table 6 takes the projected population of the Township and applies basic planning standards to determine rough projected additional acreage requirements for retail, industrial, and recreational land for 2040. The amount of land that is ultimately allocated in each category is one of the primary tasks of the land use planning process.

Table 6
Non-Residential Land Needs

	Current Standard ¹	2040 Projected Need
Retail and service uses (41 sf. per capita x 3/43,560)	6.0 acres	7.57 acres
Industrial (0.55 workers per person x 1 ac. per 10 to 20 workers)	58 to 117 acres	73.7 to 147.4 acres
Recreation and Open Space (11 ac./1000 persons)	23.4 acres	29.48 acres

Sources: Development Impact Assessment Handbook, ULI, 1994
Population Projections, WMRPC

¹ Current standard reflects the estimated land need based the application of ULI ratios to the 2015 population. It does not reflect a current land inventory.

Projection Summary

The forecasts presented above assume that the Township will continue to direct growth in the same essential patterns exhibited in the past. Watson Township is however, located in commuting proximity to urban areas, and the growth of housing and population will be strongly influenced by trends within the larger geographic region. For Watson, this involves consideration of the growth characteristics of Northeast Allegan County, the Grand Rapids/Holland Metropolitan area and the Kalamazoo metropolitan area. Generally speaking, the determinants of future population and housing growth include both local and regional factors, including the following:

- The availability of public utilities or lack thereof.
- The availability of local jobs in Allegan and the nearby casino, and elsewhere within commuting distance.
- The local agricultural economy and its influences on the real estate market in terms of the availability of land for development purposes and landownership.
- The economic health of the nearby metropolitan areas.
- The effectiveness of growth management attempts in Watson and adjacent Townships and the quantity of housing development accommodated.

- Future gasoline/energy prices and their effect on people's willingness to commute to work. The quality of roads, congestion and the travel time to and from the area will also affect people's willingness to commute.
- The quality of life in terms of the availability and quality of local support services required for development. These include police and fire protection, streets and sidewalks, parks and the quality schools and shopping opportunities.

Development Implications

The preceding chapters and sections of the Master Plan have described the existing land use, demographic, and socioeconomic conditions and trends in Watson Township. This section draws from that data and describes some of the key planning issues or concerns that the Future Land Use plan must address:

1. The growth patterns north of Kalamazoo and south of Grand Rapids along US-131 mean that growth pressure will continue to be felt in Watson Township. These pressures stem from the relative ease that people have in accessing the Township from the north and south but generally ebb and flow with the economy.
2. Developing solutions to balance the need and desire to preserve farmland while not squelching private property rights and desirable economic development is very important in the planning process. Restrictive zoning and voluntary preservation options such as PA 116 and 260 and other farmland preservation techniques must be recognized as methods by which to preserve farmland. In cooperation with Allegan County's farmland preservation initiatives, the Township is in a good position to facilitate the implementation of one or both of these voluntary methods.
3. The demand for rural living on the part of millennials is less than that of the baby boomer generation and coupled with the slow recovery in the housing market, the edge has been taken off strong housing demand and suburban sprawl. Nonetheless, the Township's rural character, its lakes, and its easy access, are likely to continue as attractions to the area. Retirement home buyers as well as those seeking a nearby, second home weekend escape are two types of buyers that are most likely to be drawn to the area. Their desire for elbow room and clean air will continue to result in the conversion of farmland and other open land to residential and recreational uses. As the countryside is slowly converted to

homes and other uses, the features that first attracted families to the community, are often eroded.

4. By requiring higher density residential development to be clustered and/or located in strategic areas around the Township, farmland and open space can be preserved elsewhere in the Township. This helps to meet housing needs of the area, places priority on preserving open space and farmland, and improves the ability to plan for economically feasible public utilities.
5. The region's ultimate transition from a strong agricultural and industrial based economy to one that is more diverse and more of a service-based economy, will generally result in a lower average per capita income for residents and newcomers. This will increase pressures for more affordable housing. The demand for more affordable housing means that pressure to allow denser and varied residential developments will increase. Dense development scattered haphazardly throughout the Township will fail to enhance or preserve farmland and rural character and will inevitably degrade environmental quality. Mixed-use zoning provisions and cluster development or conservation subdivision and open space preservation regulations are all mechanisms that can be more fully utilized to preserve open space. These are constructive growth management tools that have been or should be implemented in Watson Township.
6. The Township lacks public sanitary sewer and water utilities. Good locations for future industrial development are planned, but they lack critical infrastructure. Coupled with the general economic shift away from industry to a service-based economy, major employment opportunities are not likely to develop locally. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong in Watson Township and there is likely to be pressure to adopt land use policies that will help to foster small-scale "incubator" service uses and industries in the rural areas.
7. As in all communities, a full range of housing styles and opportunities should exist in the Township. Wherever possible, this requires the proactive allocation of sufficient land areas for manufactured housing communities and various other housing styles and densities.

Chapter 5

MASTER PLAN SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The following section illustrates the feedback gathered from citizens and stakeholders of Watson Township through several outreach methods. A community survey entitled the Watson Township Master Plan and Parks Plan Survey was made available online on March 29, 2022, comprising twenty-one (21) questions regarding demographics and preferences for use in the development of both this plan and the draft Watson Township Parks Plan, jointly. The survey was distributed and open for 115 days, acquiring sixty (60) responses and closing on June 29, 2022.

Additionally, the draft Master Plan was noticed for review during public hearings on December 7, 2022 and January 25, 2023 at Watson Township Hall. The meeting provided opportunities for interested members of the Watson area community to offer opinions and suggestions for the draft Master Plan before the Planning Commission made its decisions to recommend approval to the Township Board before and after completion of the commentary period.

The results of these input devices are included below.

Watson Township Master Plan and Parks Plan Survey

Demographics (1 – 9)

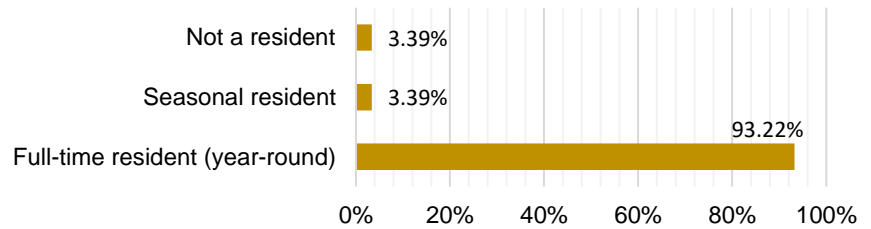
The first section of the survey (Questions 1 – 9) is intended to collect information about the types of people who respond to the survey. Knowing which demographics and groups are sharing their opinions will help the Township determine what certain stakeholders and cohorts are interested in and better align priorities accordingly.

Questions 1 and 2 on the following page reveal that the overwhelming majority of respondents (93.22%) are full-time residents of the Township living in a relatively even distribution throughout the Township's four quadrants (Question 2 cont., *Monterey Township Quadrants Map* on the following page). However, the Township's two eastern quadrants are home to approximately 25.42% more respondents than its western quadrants, indicating a potential population distribution favoring the Township's eastern half.

Question 1

“What is the status of your residency?”

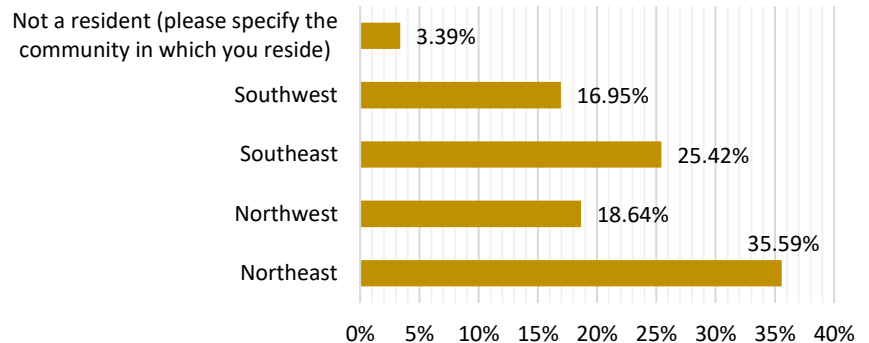
Responses: 59



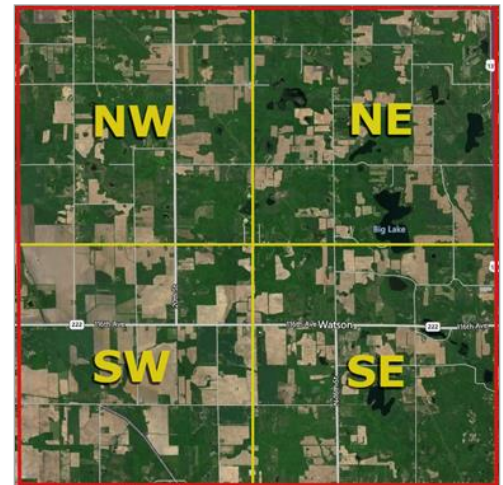
Question 2

“In which part of the Township do you live?
(please refer to the map below)”

Responses: 59



Monterey Township Quadrants Map as used in Question 2 of the Watson Township Master Plan and Parks Plan Survey to help respondents identify where within the Township, if applicable, they live.



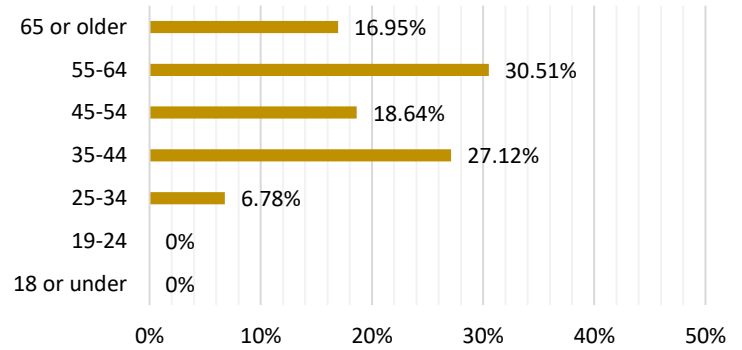
Questions 3 through 5 on the following page indicate the longevity of respondents’ connection to Watson Township. The overwhelming majority of participants are over the age of 35 (93.22%), with 30.51% alone being between the ages of 55 and 64. This participant age distribution mimics the Township-wide distribution as recoded in U.S. Census data for the year 2020, in which the median Township age is identified to be 47.7 years (2022–2027 Watson Township Master Plan, Chapter 3).

The Township’s age distribution is complemented by the length of time resident respondents have lived within the Township—a skewed slope indicating most participants (37.29%) have lived in the Township for more than 25 years, descending with each interval of fewer years. Expectedly, most participants also noted that they had no plans to move out of the Township in the next five years. The results of these questions further reinforce the known character of Watson Township as an established community of long-time residents.

Question 3

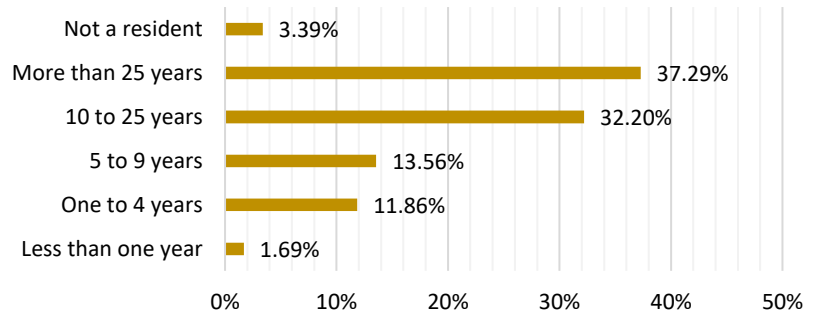
“What is your age?”

Responses: 59

**Question 4**

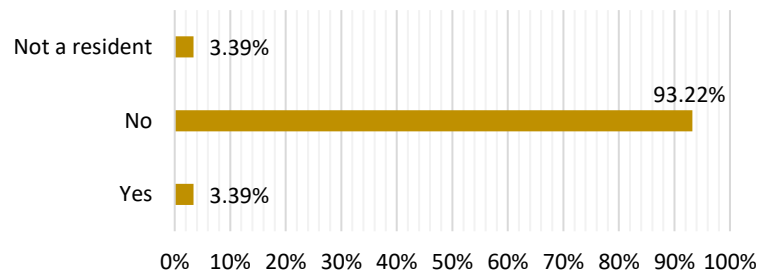
“How long have you lived in Watson Township?”

Responses: 59

**Question 5**

“In the next five years do you expect to move out of Watson Township?”

Responses: 59



Questions 6 through 8 serve to better exhibit the living, working, and capital conditions of survey participants such that recreational prospects can be better attuned to the desires of the community. In Question 6, residents were asked to check all answers that apply to them. As such, 94.92% of responses indicated that they are year-round residents. However, only a combined 15.25% work or own businesses in the Township. Even fewer identify as residential property owners (landlords) at 3.39% and no respondents identified as commercial property owners or students. The contrast between those living and working in the Township implies that a large number of respondents either live in the Township but work elsewhere, are retired, or are otherwise unemployed. The otherwise lack of landlords and commercial property owners likewise correlates to the lack of commercially and industrially zoned property within the Township and very low rental rate (Question 8).

Question 7 reveals that nearly all participants (96.61%) live in traditional single-family homes—mostly on properties five acres or more (44.07%), while 3.39% live in manufactured homes. This distribution correlates with U.S. Census Data from 2020 indicating 82.2% of housing units within the Township are single-unit, detached dwellings—many of which are likely to be old, established farmsteads (2022–2027 Watson Township Master Plan, Chapter 3).

Question 8 further reinforces this theory by revealing that nearly all respondents own their own homes (98.31%).

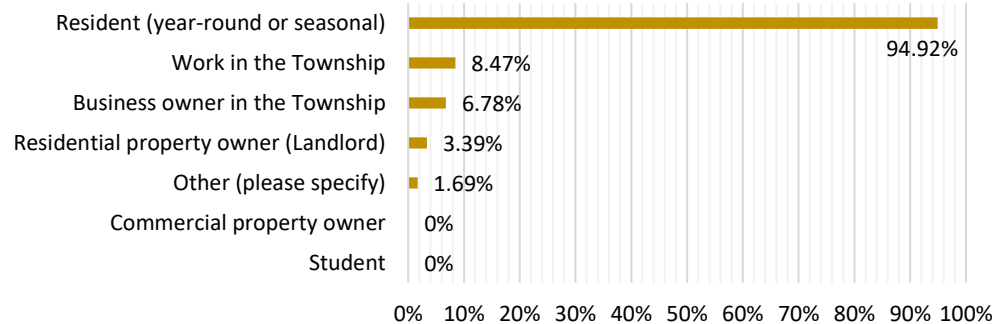
Question 6

“Which of the following best characterizes your connection to Watson Township (Please select all that apply)”

Other Responses:

(1); See Appendix A

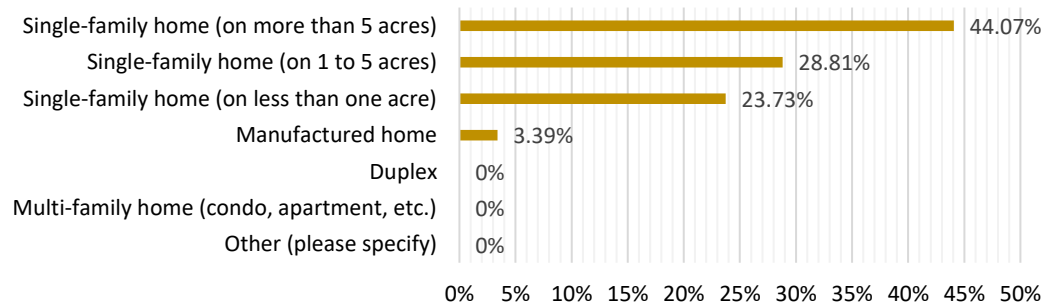
Responses: 59



Question 7

“In what type of dwelling do you live?”

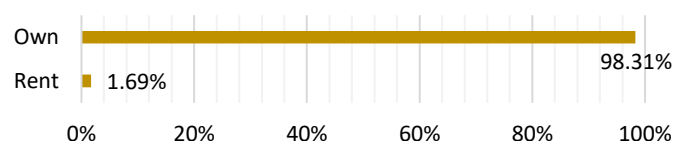
Responses: 59



Question 8

“Do you own or rent your current home?”

Responses: 59



Question 9 on page 55 provides insight into respondents’ primary place of work. Gathering data on workplaces can help identify key travel routes, corridors, and access points through which working residents frequent Watson Township. These features can then be considered in discussing where residents are currently finding recreational opportunities and where Watson Township may wish to provide recreational opportunities in the future.

The most populous answer among respondents is that they primarily work in the metropolitan Grand Rapids area at 20.34%, almost completely matched by those who are retired at 18.64%. Those who travel north for work are likely to get there via US-131 at either 116th or 124th Avenues. The third largest cohort identified their primary workplace as the City of Allegan at 13.56%, likely commuting via US-222. The next largest response, Other, is detailed in the Other responses section below. The Otsego-Plainwell area, Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area, and Elsewhere in Kalamazoo County responses, however, constitute a combined 20.33% of all respondents, nearly matching the number of Grand Rapids area respondents. This group represents those who drive south for their primary place of work—again likely taking US-131 at the above-mentioned entrances.

Finally, only 5.08% of respondents noted that they primarily work from home and no respondents noted that they work in Watson Township, but not from home. This distribution aligns with that exhibited in Question 6 on the previous page, whereby fewer than ten percent identified as working within Watson Township either from home or elsewhere. Forty percent of all respondents going far north or south for work regularly can have large implications for the community and local economy such as traffic patterns, development trends, circulation of money, and maintenance priorities.

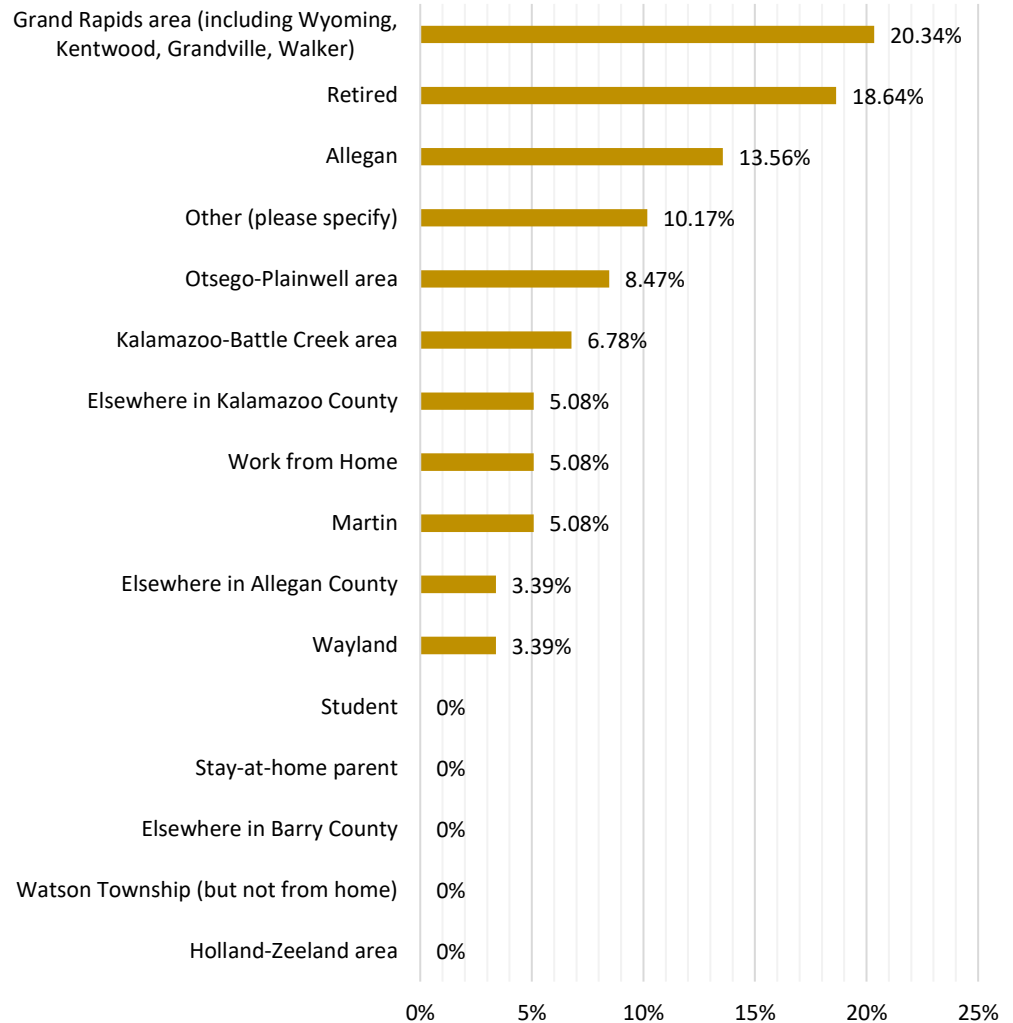
Question 9

“What is your primary place of work?”

Other Responses:

(4); See Appendix A

Responses: 59

**Opinions (10 – 15)**

This section is intended to gather information on how respondents feel about and perceive Watson Township. Input collected in this section can be used to determine what aspects of Watson Township are most and least enjoyed, where respondents are going to find essentials and activities, and how Watson Township can better facilitate and assist in residents seeking a higher quality of life.

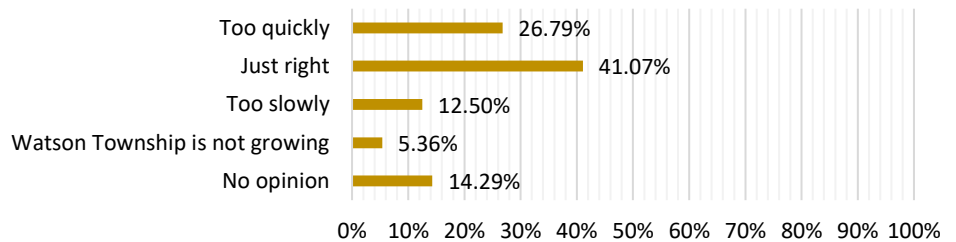
Questions 10 and 11 implore respondents’ opinions on Watson Township development. On the subject of whether the community is growing or shrinking and how fast, most respondents note that Watson Township is growing just right (41.07%), followed by those who feel it is growing too quickly (26.79%); Only one-eighth of participants feel it is growing too slowly (12.50%), and just 5.36% do not think the Township is growing.

Likewise, most respondents have no opinion either way on the Township's efforts to guide this development (47.27%). The answers to Question 11 are distributed in a normal curve with a slight skew toward a good opinion. The results of these two questions can be interpreted as a community currently interested in maintaining its historic trajectory and uninterested in large-scale growth. As such, the Township will likely be interested in maintaining its current zoning district regulations, if not increasing restrictions to tightly control any proposed development and maintain the rural character.

Question 10

"In your opinion, Watson Township is growing:"

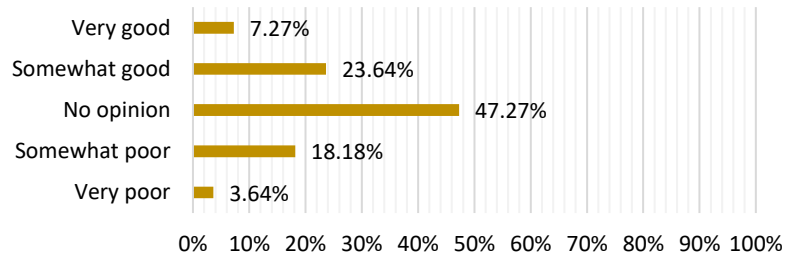
Responses: 56



Question 11

"In your opinion, Watson Township's efforts to guide growth and development have been:"

Responses: 55



Question 12 on page 58 details participants' responses to the question of where they are most likely to go for entertainment, groceries, and recreation.

The distribution for entertainment (i.e. bars, restaurants, movies, etc.) skewed slightly toward both the Otsego-Plainwell area and the metropolitan Grand Rapids area at 34.55% and 27.27%, respectively. These two communities are largely accessible via US-131, reinforcing its significance as a connecting corridor for Watson Township. Further evidence includes the third highest category, the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area, at 16.36%, putting these north and south communities at a cumulative 78.18% of all responses.

The distribution for groceries skews even more than entertainment, with the Otsego-Plainwell area accounting for over three-fourths (76.36%) of all responses. As groceries are a commodity more likely to be bought before or after work than entertainment and recreation services, this metric can be expected to better correlate with primary places of work than the other two prompts. However, the Otsego-Plainwell area only accounts for the primary workplace of 8.47%

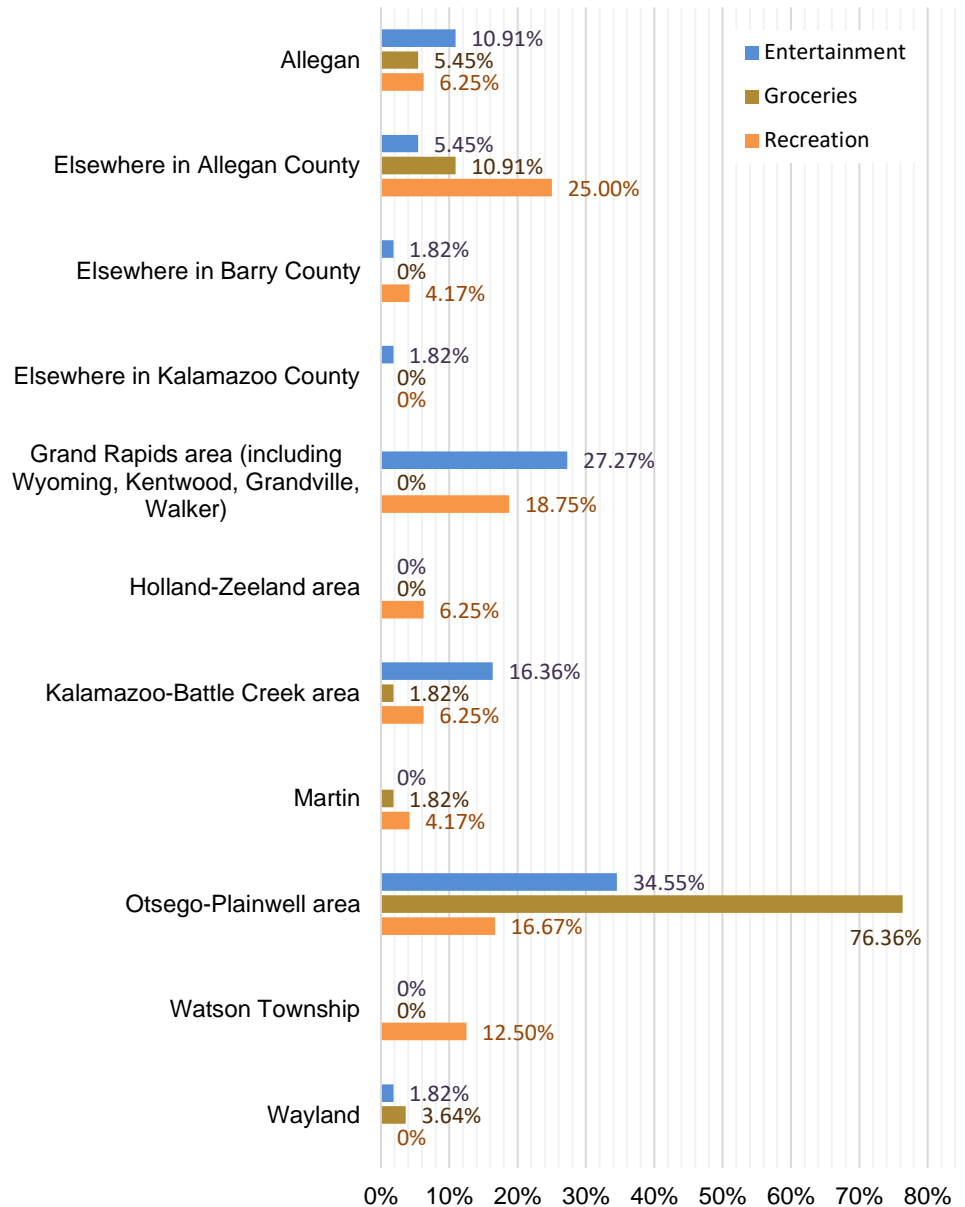
of respondents, while being the primary source of groceries for 76.36% of respondents. Even including the percentages of participants identifying as retired, stay-at-home parents, and work-from-home employees with those who work in Otsego or Plainwell, there remains a 44.17% discrepancy in the proportions. The results of this question may be interpreted to identify Otsego and Plainwell as a significant area for Watson Township residents as the nearest urbanized community with big box stores and complementary businesses. Recognizing the importance of this relationship can highlight some opportunities for refined connectivity between the two areas like prioritized road maintenance and/or paving projects.

Lastly, the distribution for recreational preference (i.e. winter sports, fishing, hunting, biking, etc.) is the most even of all three prompts, with a majority identifying areas other than those listed within Allegan County as their most likely destination for recreation. As essentially all bodies of water, ORV trails, state forestland, and private hunting property in Allegan County are outside city limits, likely explaining said majority. However, the second and third most popular locations were the metropolitan Grand Rapids and Otsego-Plainwell areas at 18.75% and 16.67%, respectively, further reinforcing the significance of these US-131 communities in connection to Watson Township. Knowing where Watson Township stakeholders are currently deciding to spend their recreational time can help identify what aspects of outdoor recreation the Township may wish to incorporate into its own community. The abundance of those choosing rural places in Allegan County indicates a potential favorability toward the natural, wilderness-related types of recreational opportunities.

Question 12

“Where are you most likely to go for the following goods and services?”

Responses: 55



Question 13 on the following page consists of seventeen (17) subquestions asking participants their opinion on various aspects of Watson Township. Similarly to Question 11 on page 28, subquestions are answered on a five (5)-step scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Each subquestion features the weighted average of all answers, indicating either a very strongly aligned reaction, an even distribution, or symmetrical polarization to any given aspect of the Township. This weighted average is then broken down by stratified bar graphs as seen in every previous question thus far.

Question 13

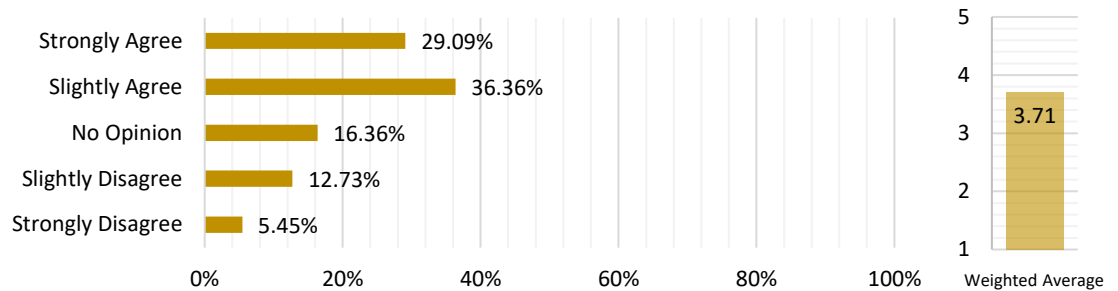
“How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Watson Township?”

Responses: 55

Question 13.1

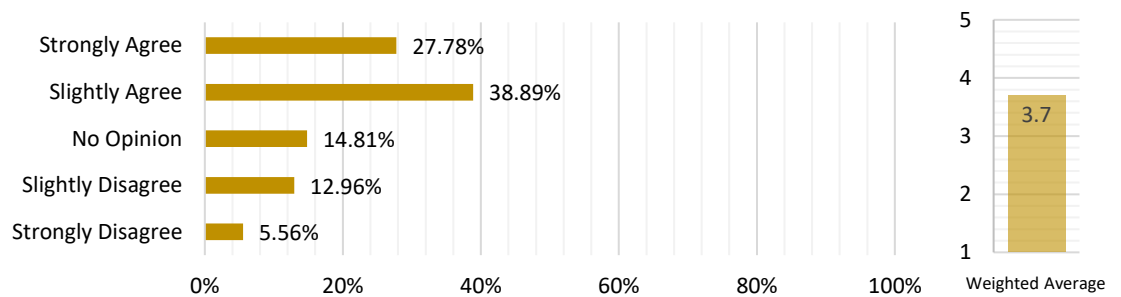
“Traffic congestion”

Responses: 55

**Question 13.2**

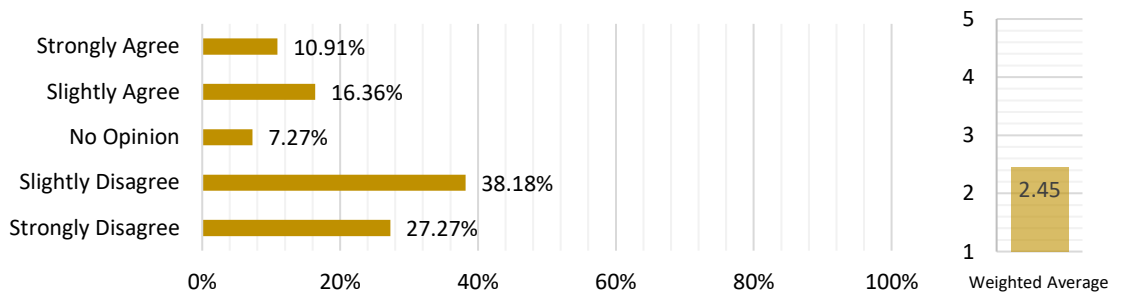
“Traffic speeds”

Responses: 54

**Question 13.3**

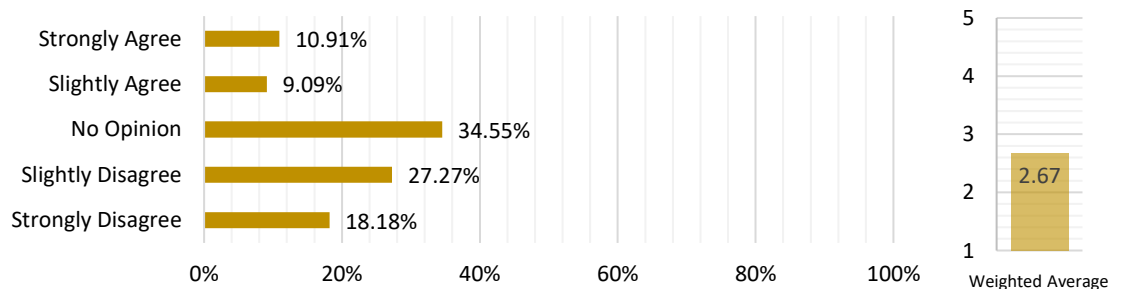
“Public road quality”

Responses: 55

**Question 13.4**

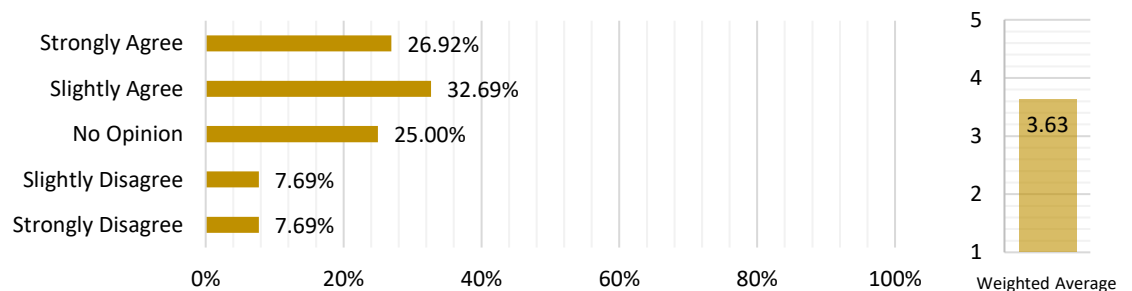
“Number of bike trails/paved shoulders”

Responses: 55

**Question 13.5**

“Quality of groundwater”

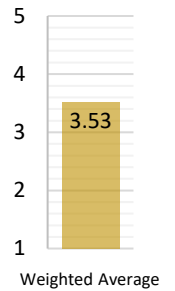
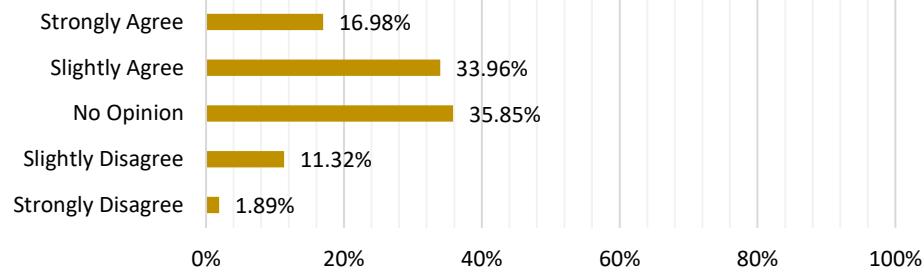
Responses: 52



Question 13.6

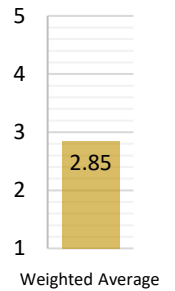
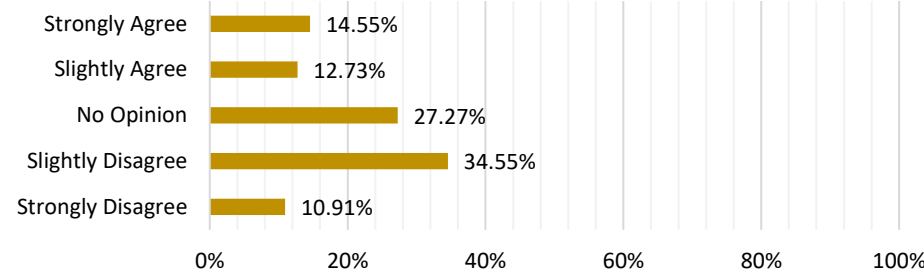
“Quality of
surface water”

Responses: 53

**Question 13.7**

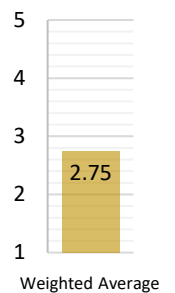
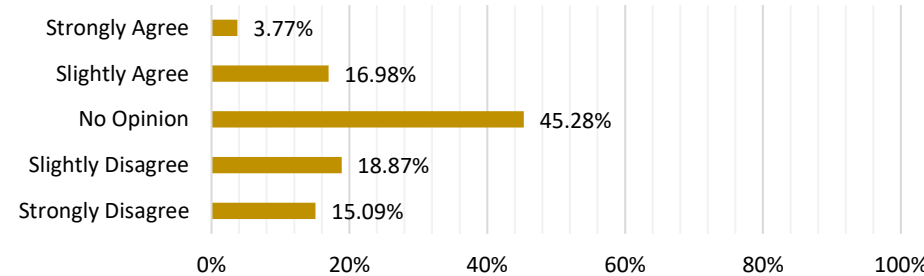
“Enforcement of
zoning and
property
maintenance”

Responses: 55

**Question 13.8**

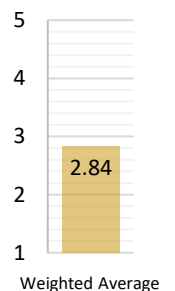
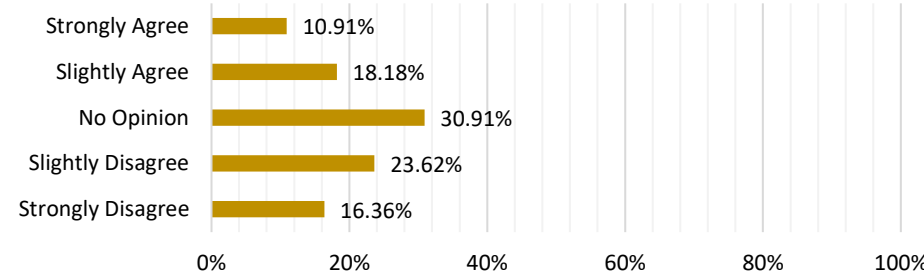
“Amount of
farmland
converted to
residential lots”

Responses: 53

**Question 13.9**

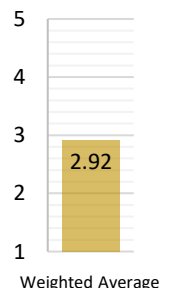
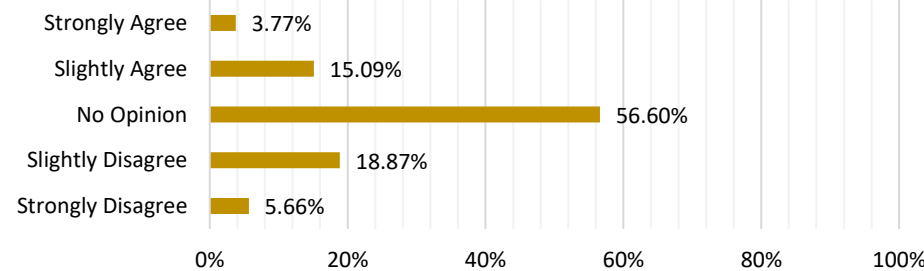
“Amount of open
space, natural
areas, and parks”

Responses: 55

**Question 13.10**

“Guidance of
commercial
development”

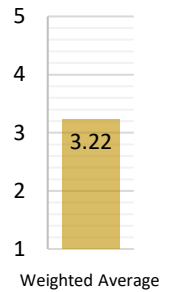
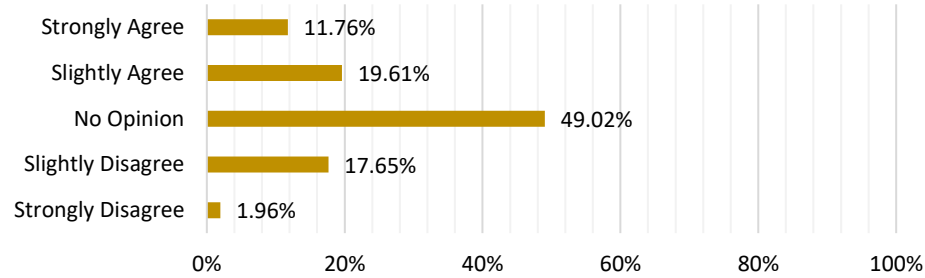
Responses: 53



Question 13.11

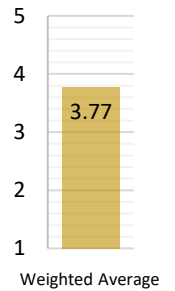
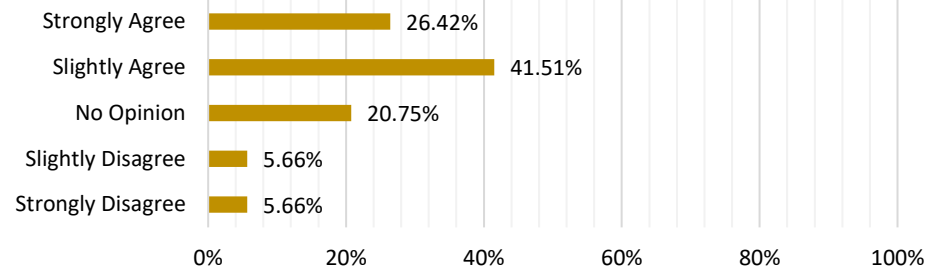
“Guidance of
residential
development”

Responses: 51

**Question 13.12**

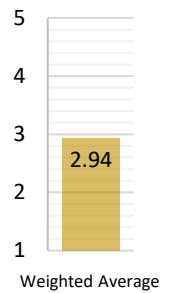
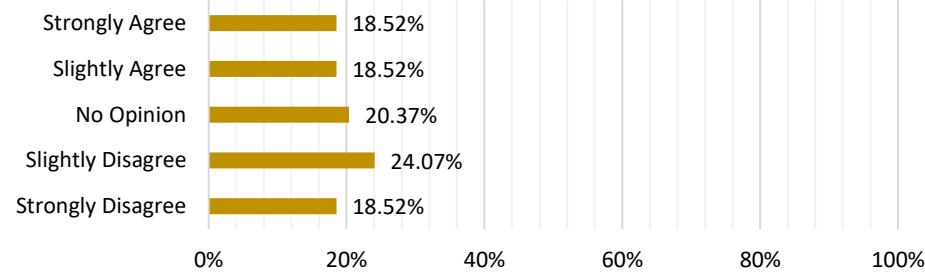
“Adequacy of
public safety
(police, fire, etc.)”

Responses: 53

**Question 13.13**

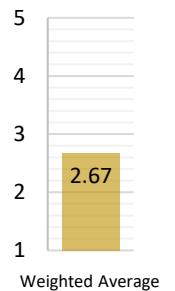
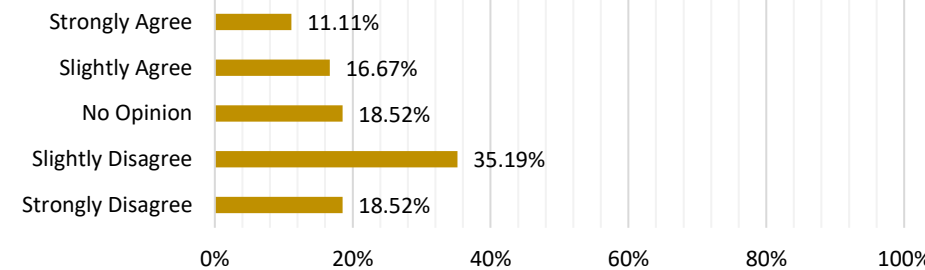
“Adequacy of
shopping areas”

Responses: 54

**Question 13.14**

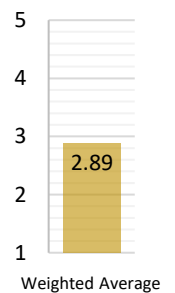
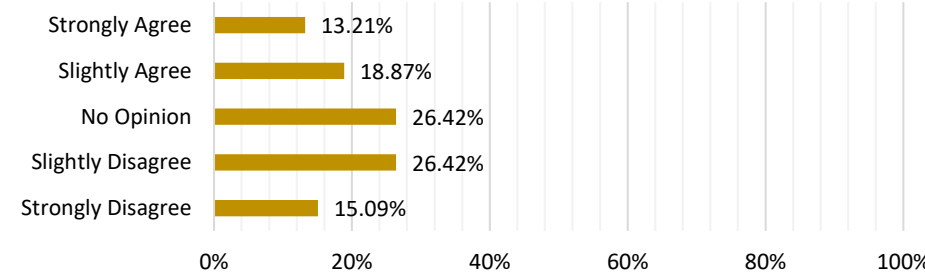
“Amount of
recreational
facilities”

Responses: 54

**Question 13.15**

“Amount of
available
entertainment and
social activities”

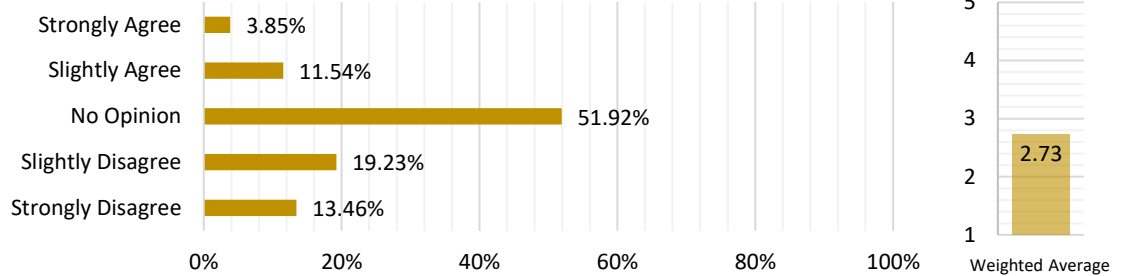
Responses: 53



Question 13.16

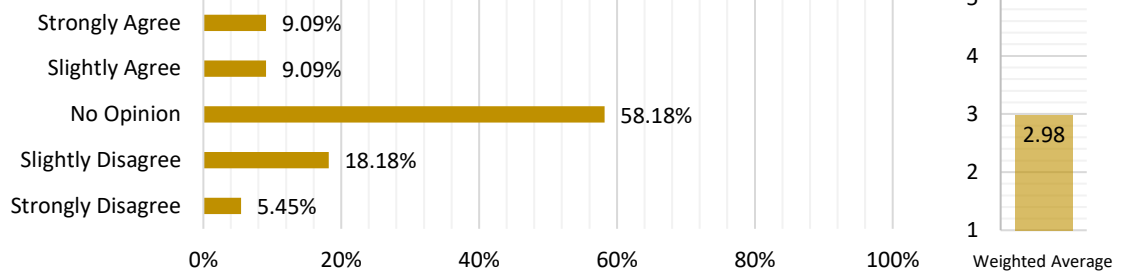
“New housing costs”

Responses: 52

**Question 13.17**

“Variety of housing options (senior living, rentals, etc.)”

Responses: 55



Out of each of the above subquestions, those analyzed below include all questions in which the weighted average either exceeds 3.5 or precedes 2.5, indicating a very strong reaction, respectively.

Subquestion	Weighted Avg.
Q 13.1 “Traffic congestion”	3.71
Q 13.2 “Traffic speeds”	3.70
Q 13.3 “Public road quality	2.45
Q 13.5 “Quality of groundwater”	3.63
Q 13.6 “Quality of surface water”	3.53
Q 13.12 “Adequacy of public safety (police, fire, etc.)”	3.77

All but one of the above subquestions is recorded as having a weighted average of more than 3.5, indicating that, about topics they feel strongly, respondents mostly feel positively. Subquestion 13.6 remains an outlier within this measurement. Subquestions 13.1 through 13.3 all pertain to Township roads and traffic, whereby more respondents indicate that they are largely satisfied with the amount and circulation of traffic within the Township (3.71 and 3.70 averages). Simultaneously, they feel just as strongly that the quality of Township roads is greatly lacking (2.45 average). These results are significant to a bedroom community such as Watson Township in which many residents are traveling to places like Grand Rapids and the Otsego-Plainwell area for work and errands.

Meanwhile, the strongly positive responses to Subquestions 13.5 and 13.6 suggest that Watson Township residents strongly approve and are proud of their natural resources, with weighted averages of 3.63 and 3.53, respectively. A rural community appreciative of their ecology is more likely to respect and take care of it, which in turn helps to maintain its natural, rural feel.

When asked about the adequacy of public safety services, respondents were enthusiastically approving with a weighted average of 3.77, suggesting that the community feels a sense of safety and security despite the sparse population. Lastly, all other subquestions received weighted averages within a half-degree of 3, suggesting a general lack of opinion or polarization on a subject.

The last two questions in this section, 14 and 15 (below), document what types of housing and businesses, if any, respondents would like to see within Watson Township. The results from Question 14 mirror those of Question 7 in which respondents were asked in what type of dwelling they live: Single-family homes on five (5) or more acres is the most popular choice in both, followed by the same on one (1) to five (5) acres, and on less than one (1) acre, accounting for a cumulative 68.63% of all responses. While all categories of housing received some amount of answers, only single-family homes gathered such support; the next most popular answer, retirement communities/assisted living facilities, was only chosen by 14.55% of all participants. Comparing these results to the U.S. Census distribution of the same housing types (Figure 6, Ch. 3) suggests that Watson Township community members are happy with the way their housing stock is distributed and comprised with very little desire to see change.

Results from Question 15 further support maintaining the Township's rural trajectory. The most popular prospective business among respondents are farm markets and agritourism, receiving votes from 55.36% of participants. This is followed by sit-down restaurants and personal services at 37.50% and 26.79%, respectively, and no new businesses in the Township at 21.43%. Many of the most popular options are those one might find in a small, rural town, while the larger impact industries such as financial and business professional services, assembly and manufacturing, research and development, and regional shopping centers, received little to no votes. Once again, results indicate a desire to maintain the Township's rural character and see only appropriately scaled businesses, if any, enter the area.

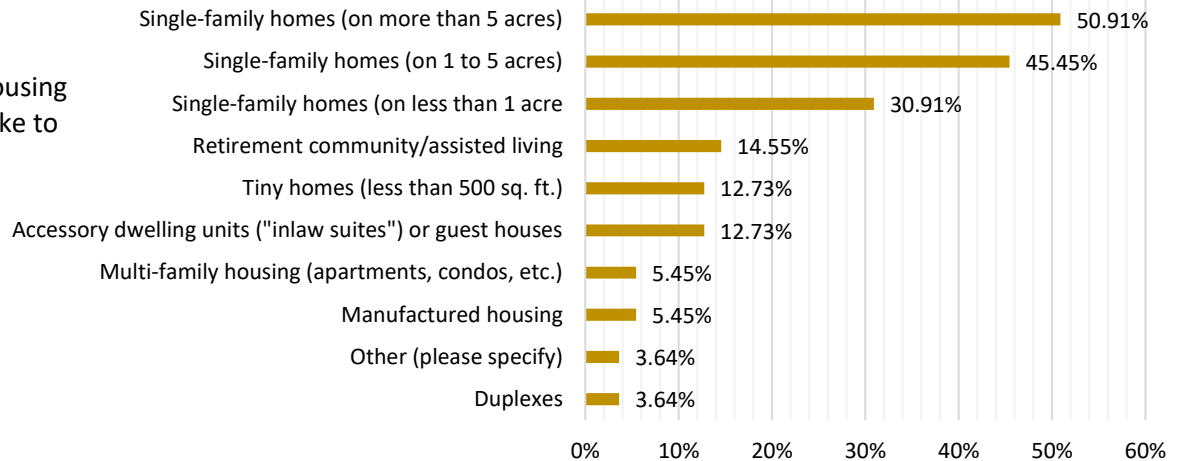
Question 14

“What types of housing would you most like to see in Watson Township? (Check all that apply)”

Other Responses:

(2); See Appendix A

Responses: 55

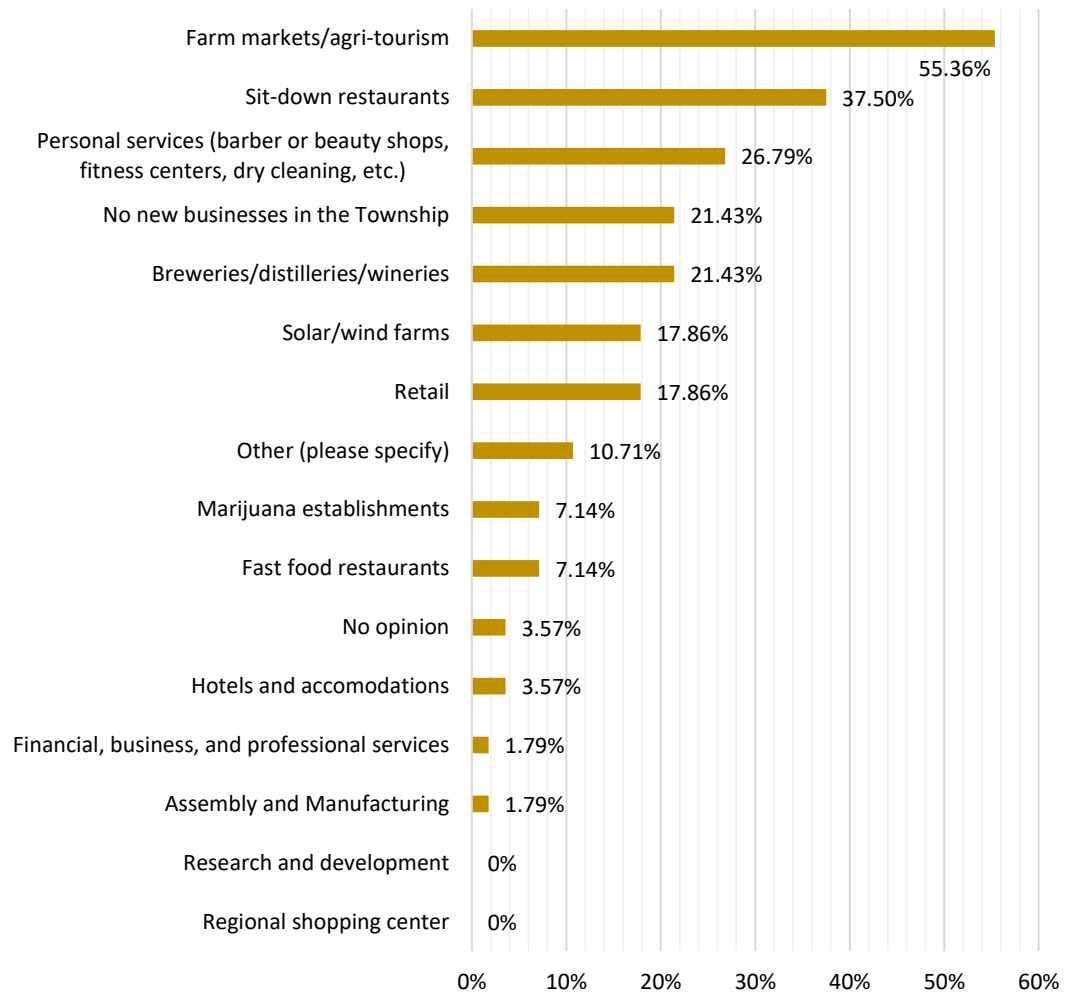
**Question 15**

“What types of businesses would you most like to see in Watson Township? (Check all that apply)”

Other Responses:

(6); See Appendix A

Responses: 56

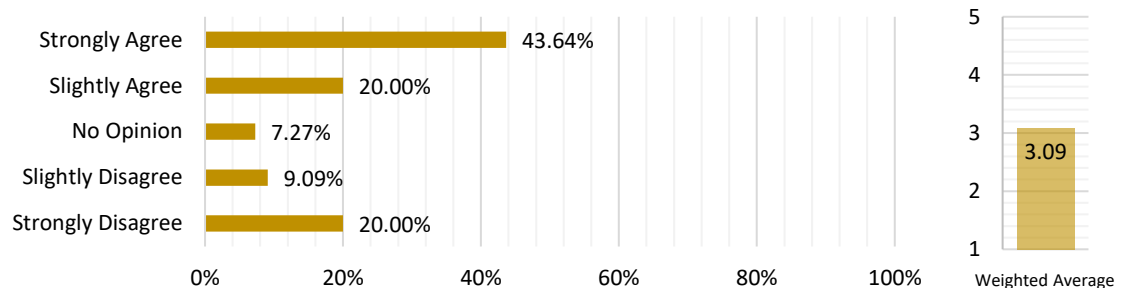


Opinions (16 – 22)

This section is intended to collect information regarding how respondents feel Watson Township should move forward with specific topics and preferences. Like Question 13 in the previous section, these questions are formatted with the five (5)-step scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Unlike Question 13, though, they are not grouped as subquestions under one larger question since each included statement is unique and independent of any other statement before or after it.

Question 16

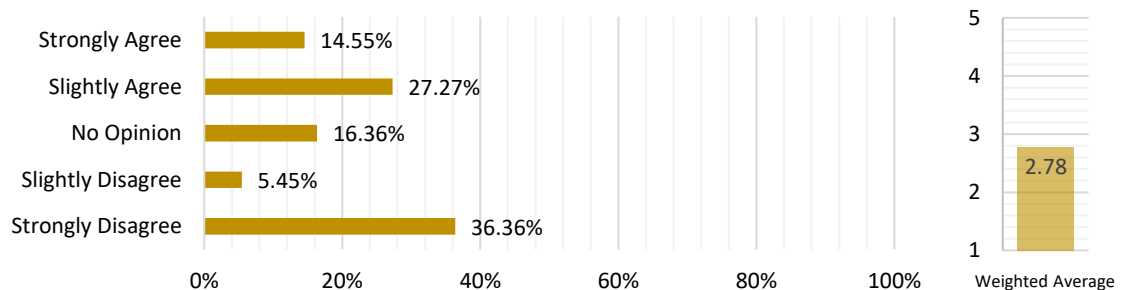
“Watson Township should acquire more land for parks, natural and recreational areas, and non-motorized trails.”



Responses: 55

Question 17

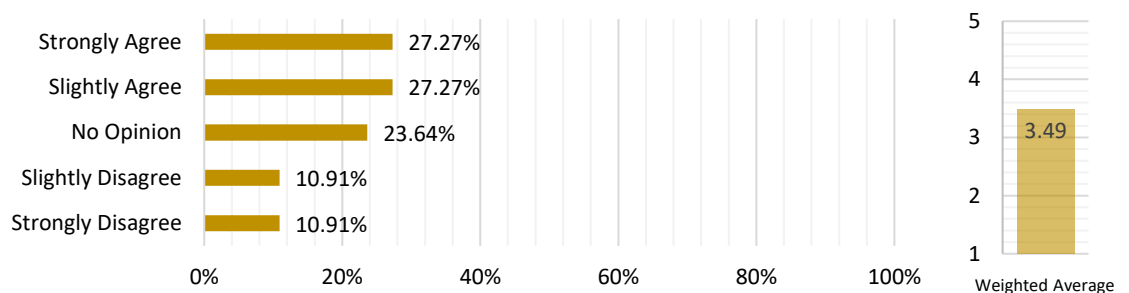
“I would support a dedicated millage in Watson Township to acquire and maintain land for parks, natural and recreational areas, and non-motorized trails.”



Responses: 55

Question 18

“I would support a dedicated road millage in Watson Township to improve public road quality.”

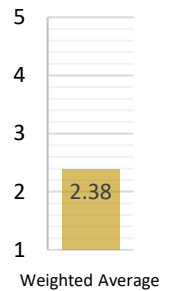
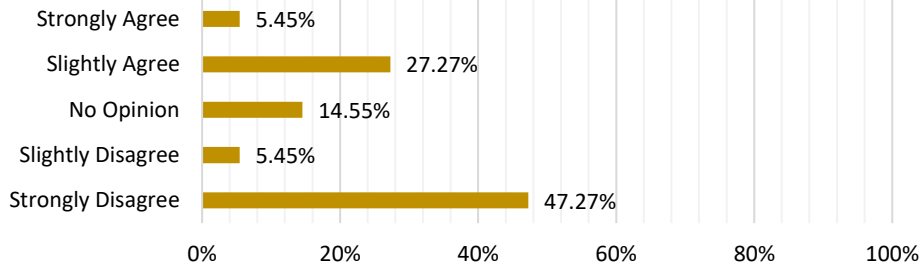


Responses: 55

Question 19

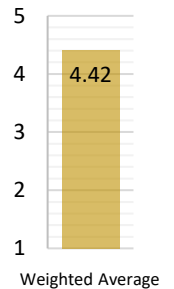
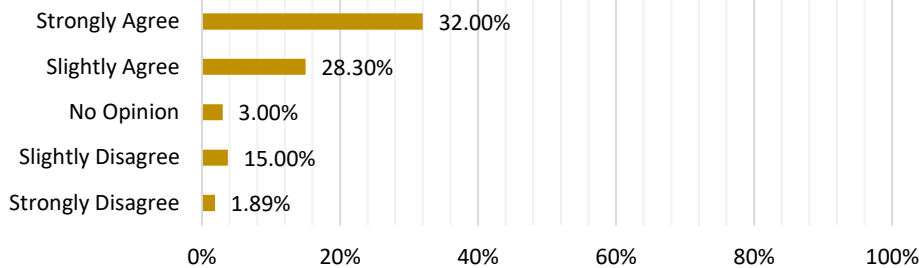
“Watson Township needs to attract more businesses and commercial development.”

Responses: 55

**Question 20**

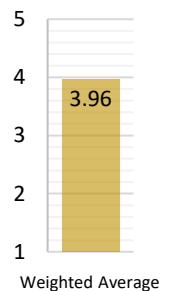
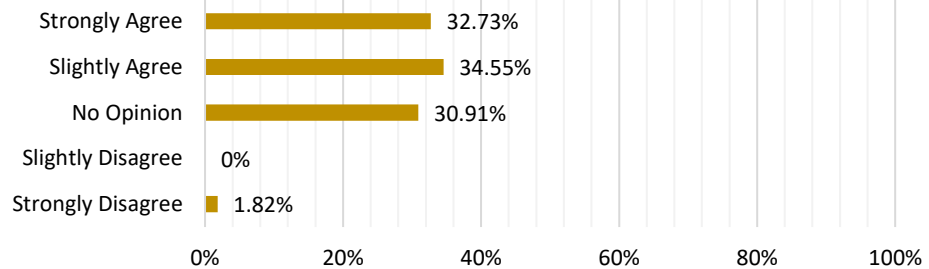
“Watson Township should preserve farmland.”

Responses: 53

**Question 21**

“I would be willing to attend a public input meeting about the Watson Township Master Plan and share my thoughts and opinions.”

Responses: 55



As with the results analysis with Question 13, questions receiving a weighted average above 3.5 or below 2.5 are further broken down below.

Question 19 is the first of the questions to receive a strongly polarized response with a weighted average of just 2.38, signaling very clearly respondents' disdain at the prospect of attracting more business and commercial development to the Township. The sentiment expressed in this result is complemented in Question 20, whereby respondents overwhelmingly agreed that Watson Township should preserve farmland with a weighted average of 4.42; Almost one-third strongly agreed with the prompt and another quarter slightly agreed.

Unrelated to the previous two questions but still highly polarized, Question 21 received a weighted average of 3.96 on the topic of attending a public input meeting for the Watson

Township Master Plan. The distribution suggests that there are voices within Watson Township with more specific desires beyond what can be translated through survey results. A community willing to engage in the public input process is one that will likely see their visions realized through persistence and enthusiastic participation.

Honorable mention for nearly breaking the positive half-degree threshold is awarded to Question 18 with a weighted average of 3.49. While responses are still fairly stratified across the options, respondents trended somewhat positively toward the notion that the Township should establish a dedicated millage to improve road quality. While this distribution is less telling than others in the Preferences section, it consistently correlates with Question 13.3 in which participants declared their dissatisfaction with the quality of public roads in the Township and may have the potential to influence future methods to address this need.

Initial conclusions from these questions further solidify the sentiment of Township stakeholders to keep the Township the way it is—rural, quiet, and natural. Watson Township can use this information to support research into alternative methods of funding to achieve the goals of the Master Plan.

Question 21

“If there is anything else you would like your Watson Township local government to know, please include in the box below any questions, concerns, or other comments you may have.”

Other Responses: (30); See Appendix A for full catalogue of written responses.

Finally, respondents were asked to provide any further input that was not addressed in Questions 1 through 20. In the interest of document length, these thirty responses are included in Appendix A at the end of the Master Plan.

Chapter 6

GOALS AND POLICIES

Planning goals are strategic statements that express and define the community's future. They provide long-range direction for virtually all planning activities. For that reason there needs to be a good understanding of the community's planning goals both in terms of the physical direction that they are leading you and in terms of social, economic and regulatory implications. Equally important, there needs to be a consensus among the elected officials and the Planning Commission that the goals stated in the Master Plan are relevant, realistic and reflective of the overall needs and desires of residents and landowners. For these reasons, it is important that elected officials and the Planning Commission periodically review and revalidate its planning goals and the tools that it uses to achieve its goals.

A community's Goals and Policies are related and co-dependent. The policies are in essence action statements that if pursued and implemented will serve to allow the community to reach its goals. The policies along with certain other recommended implementation measures also need to be periodically updated and validated.

- *A goal is a broad general statement of a final purpose or ambition; a position or situation which a community seeks to achieve.*
- *A policy is a specific action position that is specifically needed to accomplish a goal. Policy statements are most often directive in tone and often referred to as "objectives".*

The following Goals and Policies build upon the goals and objectives included in the previous Master Plan. They were refined subsequent to a process of identification and discussion of a number of current and emerging development issues. The process included analysis of demographic and development trends and discussions with Township officials about local development issues, concerns and priorities.

The statements below are listed by topic areas. Following each goal are policies that serve to state the specific means of achieving the desired goal.

GOAL #1

The Environment

To ensure that new development takes place in an environmentally consistent and sound manner and that the potential for flood hazard, soil erosion, disturbances to the natural drainage network and surface and groundwater contamination are minimized, thereby protecting natural resources and preserving scenic and environmental quality, as well as minimizing the public burden.

Policies

- Through zoning and site plan review, encourage approaches to land development that take natural features such as soils, topography, steep slopes, hydrology, and natural vegetation into account in the process of site design.
- Implement Low impact design standards for commercial and industrial development and private streets.
- Natural Features Inventory and Protection-Conduct detailed natural features inventory and rank “high”, “medium”, and “low” priorities for preservation. Adjust development regulations accordingly by the institution of one or more of the following for use in development review and long range planning efforts:
 - Wetland, regulations (Township level)
 - Shoreline and stream bank regulations
 - Steep Slope Regulations
 - Woodland Protection
 - View Shed Regulations
 - Wildlife corridor
 - Open Space Preservation Plan

GOAL #2

Agriculture and Rural Character

To conserve agricultural land, promote the agricultural economic base of the Township and preserve the rural character of the community.

Policies

- Support the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act, P.A. 116 of 1974 by encouraging use of preservation agreements by area farmers and approving such agreements that are consistent with the land use plan
- Through zoning, discourage extensive non-farm development from occurring in those areas that contain high quality farmland.
- Monitor needs of the agricultural community. Consider “value added” land uses e.g. facilitate agri-tourism type business opportunities in the AG zone
- Reevaluate A-1 District boundaries and ensure adequate rural buffers

- Enable local farmers to participate in the Allegan County PDR program
- Monitor the effectiveness of the adopted Open Space preservation Project, Designated Open Space District and Conservation Subdivision PUD provisions

GOAL #3

Housing and Residential Development

Provide for a wide range of housing opportunities within the township while encouraging a general low density pattern of residential development consistent with the rural/agricultural character found in most areas of the township. Encourage higher densities to occur in areas most appropriate for such development

Policies

- Provide for the construction of single family homes, placement of contemporary quality mobile homes and construction of multiple housing at acceptable densities.
- Minimize delays due to review and processing of development regulations.
- Identify and plan for additional land area that may support higher density developments such as MHP and multi-family development should infrastructure be made available.
- Implement density standards that are consistent with the natural capacity of soils to handle on-site septic systems and which promote the preservation of the township's rural and agrarian qualities.
- Promote clustering as the preeminent and favored form of development to achieve desired "gross densities".
- Encourage the concentration of development in locations where future public utilities and services can be most economically and efficiently provided, when they are needed.
- Improve infrastructure (utility and street improvements) policies and standards to recognize both public and private community utility systems.
- Adopt "concurrency" as an overarching principal pertaining to new, large residential and business developments.
- Continue to rely on the proximity to transportation and the real potential for future utilities as major factors in directing future medium and high densities in the eastern part of Township.

GOAL #4

Commercial Development

Provide for the basic service and shopping needs of the township's residents by directing commercial development to take place in suitable areas but in a manner which limits commercial strip development, minimizes conflicts with surrounding land uses and prevents unnecessary conflicts with the movement of traffic along major highways.

Policies

- Limit commercial development to a few concentrated areas, rather than allow strip

development. This will entail "nodal" development at key locations along M-222 and elsewhere instead of commercial strip development

- Anticipate the implications of the US-131 12th Street interchange and the Martin Speedway on adjacent land uses and plan for limited commercial development areas at each location
- Avoid high densities of commercial development that would lead to the need for public utilities and services that cannot be economically and efficiently provided in the foreseeable future. Improve concurrency policies for infrastructure
- Encourage the shared use of commercial driveways and limit the number and spacing of driveways
- Promote high quality commercial development through local site plan review and site design standards
- Implement low impact and green approaches to site and building design
- Evaluate using adaptive reuse of farm buildings for limited low impact service uses

GOAL #5

Industrial Development

Provide for limited light industrial development in areas that are easily accessible by major transportation facilities.

Policies

- Re-evaluate district boundaries and additional potential industrial locations and promote the development of an industrial park and the clustering of industrial uses in the US-131/M-222 area rather than piece-meal single lot development.
- Promote high quality industrial development through local site plan review and site design standards while encouraging low impact and green approaches to site and building design.
- Evaluate using adaptive reuse of farm buildings for limited low impact industrial or service uses.
- Improve concurrency policies for infrastructure as related to intensive industrial uses and industrial processes involving significant traffic volumes and high volumes of water and wastewater.

GOAL #6

Economic Development

Increase the nonresidential tax base of the township and the availability of jobs within the community, thereby increasing the ability of the township to provide services, bettering the economic well being of residents and improving the overall quality of life in the area.

Policies

- Accommodate limited, high quality commercial development
- Accommodate limited, high quality industrial development
- Monitor and re-evaluate the effectiveness of the Township's tax abatement policies
- Coordinate economic development initiatives with Allegan County and nearby Martin, Allegan, and Hopkins Townships
- Implement commercial and industrial land use goals and objectives

GOAL #7

Land Use Conflicts

Discourage and avoid conflicts between land uses.

Policies

- Prevent the wide scale scattering of intensive and higher density non-agricultural land uses in the rural countryside.
- In areas of higher density, provide for the separation between conflicting land uses by designating suitable transitional districts or requiring greenbelt or buffer areas.
- Institute or improve landscape and site location and design standards as needed for special uses that are identified as potentially problematic.

GOAL #8

Streets and Transportation

*Maximize the efficiency, safety and ease of maintenance of the road system. Make provisions for road improvements that will promote growth in a way that is consistent with adopted goals and policies relating to land use. **Over time, provide safe and comfortable routes for walking, bicycling, and buses thus enabling travel that meet the needs of all users of the streets, including children, families, older adults, and people with disabilities.***

Policies

- Limit the number of driveways along major highway arterials by encouraging the shared use of driveways by commercial establishments and other major uses through site plan review.
- Encourage clustered development.
- Maintain reasonable minimum standards for private streets while ensuring that private streets do not interfere with the logical extension of the public road system or conflict with farmland preservation goals.
- Establish priorities for incremental road improvements based on the Master Plan and areas of highest need.
- Improve concurrency policies relative to the adequacy of roads prior to rezoning and development.

- Improve cooperation with the Allegan County Road Commission so that routes for future roads are planned and coordinated well in advance.
- Where and when appropriate and economically feasible, integrate “Complete Streets” infrastructure and design features into street design and construction to create safe and inviting environments for all users to walk, bicycle, and use public transportation. Consider standards applicable to private developments that will ensure the inclusion and integration of these features in the process of development review and approval.

GOAL #9

Quality of Life

Prevent the establishment of uses which, by their existence, tend to lower property values and the quality of life within the community.

Policies

- Monitor and implement regulations necessary to prevent establishment of substandard housing units.
- Monitor and implement regulations aimed toward controlling outdoor storage of household equipment, household goods and other materials, where objectionable.
- Enforce regulations requiring the adequate siting and screening of those land uses which tend to have a blighting influence on the community.
- Provide necessary resources and expertise to enforce the provisions of the zoning ordinance.
- Encourage separation between conflicting adjacent land uses.

GOAL #10

Recreation

Provide for diverse recreational opportunities for all resident population groups.

Policies

- Develop a recreation plan which identifies the recreational needs of the community and sets forth a strategy for the acquisition and development of recreational facilities.
- Work closely with Allegan County, adjacent townships and the school districts in the provision of recreational facilities that can be used by area wide residents.

GOAL #11

Public and Private utilities

Common private community-sized water and wastewater systems are to be designed in a manner that permits the common distribution and collection lines to be easily connected to public systems should they become available in the future.

Policies

- Subject to plan approval and administrative details, the Township may assume ultimate responsibility of each common wastewater or water system.
- User associations shall be responsible for daily operations, cost of service and normal maintenance but major long term capital replacement, if needed may create the necessary assessment vehicles for financing required capital improvements.
- Deed Restrictions shall be placed on each common wastewater or water system notifying all owners that the system may be required to connect to, or otherwise be made public in the future.
- Where feasible private collection and distribution lines and appurtenances of a private common water and waste-water treatment system to be designed and built to municipal standards adopted by the Township.

Chapter 7

FUTURE LAND USE

The Master Plan and Future Land Use Map will serve as a guide for future growth. The Future Land Use Map is a graphic manifestation of the previously presented goals and objectives and the ideals of managed growth and physical resource protection. It takes into consideration many factors including existing land use, land use trends and development issues, public input, demographics, environmental resources and physical limitations and a variety of transportation and infrastructure influences.

The most intensive land uses in the Township are likely to occur in a more or less linear fashion along the M-222 and US-131 corridors with a more centralized node near and around the US-131/ M-222 interchange itself. Due to these highways and easy access for automobiles, this corridor pattern of development is fairly common. If not controlled, however, this linear sprawl and a leapfrog pattern of development can threaten the Township's remaining rural character. Three basic planning principles can be embodied within the Master Plan to help minimize sprawls negative affects. They include:

Utilize and Preserve Agricultural Resources. The Township continues to have a resilient agricultural community with an abundance of productive farmland. Land fragmentation and the proliferation of non-farm residences within the farming areas disrupt the efficiency of farm operations and results in irreconcilable land use conflicts. The majority of new development should be located where soils and topography are not fully conducive to modern agricultural practices and where conflicts with farming operations will be minimized.

Smart Growth: Efficiency and Compactness. Most development activity whether as singular projects or as a series of smaller proposals with a collectively large impact, should be directed to locations where the existing commercial services and public improvements such as improved streets can be maximized. Significant development should only be zoned and allowed to occur when the infrastructure (roads and utilities) and protective services such as police and fire are capable of supporting and sustaining it. Where allowed, rural residential clusters of homes should use natural and man-made boundaries and landmarks to create well defined neighborhoods and to create sufficient buffers between home sites and nearby agricultural operations and sensitive environments.

Protection of Natural Systems. Natural areas and open space define much of the area's visual and physical character. Special attention is required to protect environmentally sensitive areas, particularly along streams and around lakes and wetlands. Environmentally focused planning and regulatory tools are required to protect shorelines, wetlands and floodplains and to preserve key natural habitats and wildlife populations.

General Overview

The general pattern of development envisioned for the Township is one of continued dominance by agriculture, especially in the southwest and west and by very low density rural development. In the rural areas where residential development is supported the Township's numerous lakes are envisioned to continue as focal points of residential growth and elsewhere, small clusters of residential development are envisioned as the predominant form. Overall, the gross density of residential development is not expected to exceed one dwelling unit per five acres. Ample, contiguous areas of open space that will enable the conservation of farmland and preservation of natural systems of woodland and wetlands will be encouraged. An obvious aspect of the Future Land Use Map is also the focusing of moderate commercial and industrial development and the highest potential densities of residential growth in the US-131/M-222 intersection area. This strategy is supported by the area's good highway access and its consistency with existing land use patterns. It is noteworthy that while the extent of the proposed commercial and light industrial areas in the immediate intersection area has not been expanded from the previous plan, two additional commercial or mixed use areas are now indicated. These include the interchange commercial planning district in the northeast at the 124th Avenue /US-131 interchange and an area the southeast, roughly coinciding with the US-131 Drag Strip and Motor Park that is located in adjacent Martin Township. The M-222 corridor west from US-131 is also now recognized as a location where very low intensity service uses may be able to locate in a controlled fashion.

Only time will provide certain clarity on the type, relationships and ultimate scale of the development that occurs in the Township. For that reason, the Master Plan and Future Land Use Map must be periodically reviewed and revised. In that way the Master Plan can reflect changes brought about by changing economic conditions and social trends while still maintaining long-range goals. There is also no precise schedule to implement the recommendations contained in the plan. For example, the timing of a rezoning to allow for low density residential development in an area now zoned for agriculture use will be dependent upon a number of factors, the most important of which is the availability of infrastructure which includes public utilities, adequate roadways and public services such as police and fire protection. Another triggering or threshold factor that will be considered when reviewing any request for rezoning will be the availability of land that is already zoned and serviced in the vicinity.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The following paragraphs describe several key plan elements and presents supporting recommendations for each of the various future land use categories that are depicted on the Future Land Use Map.

Agriculture Conservation and Rural Preservation

To prolong the agricultural base of Watson Township and to help maintain its rural character, the Master Plan promotes the continuance of an "Agricultural Conservation" planning district" and a Rural Preservation" planning district. Together, these planning categories comprise a strategy for maintaining the agricultural and rural character of the Township.

- ◆ ***Agriculture Conservation Planning District*** "(A-1 Zoning District) includes areas in which farming activity is promoted as the primary long term land use and non-farm development is discouraged. The focus is to enable strong farming influence to continue where it is well established and least impacted by existing development.
- ◆ ***"Rural Preservation Planning District"*** (A-2 Rural Conservation Zoning District) includes areas where farming is still permitted but where limited residential development will be permitted at low densities. This district is characterized by rolling topography and extensive areas of shrub land and woodlands, significant areas of wetland and other open land in relatively natural or recently undisturbed state. Very low density residences and appropriately designed rural residential cluster developments with somewhat higher net densities may be accommodated on soils that are less productive for farming but in order to be supported, private community wastewater treatment systems may be required. The preservation of natural features and wildlife habitat (rural character) are high priorities in this planning area. Acceptance of residential developments occurring within the Planning District will be predicated upon the preservation of meaningful tracts of open space within and surrounding clusters of smaller home sites rather than extensive large lot developments.

Through the continued use of coordinated zoning and utility policies within these planning designations and by supporting private, county and state level farmland preservation programs, areas within the Township that are most suited for agricultural purposes will be retained. In areas where the viability of farms is less obvious and the justification for restrictive farm preservation techniques is less evident, a demand for rural residential development at very low gross density will be accommodated in a regulated fashion.

Agriculture Conservation Planning District (A-1)

The Agricultural Conservation Planning District coincides with the A-1 Agricultural Zoning District and its boundaries are intended to define the ultimate boundaries of A-1 Zoning District.

It encompasses approximately twenty five percent of the Township's land area. Within these areas, farming operations are promoted as the predominant use. Single family homes are permitted on parcels that may be as small as one acre in size and as large as two acres, but the number of residential lots permitted is limited by a sliding scale related to parent parcel size. The sliding scale will result in a gross residential density for the district that is approximately one dwelling unit for each 12.5 acres. The Agricultural Conservation planning area contains the majority of the remaining land areas enrolled as P.A. 116, "Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program".

The "Farmland/Development Suitability" analysis found in Chapter 2 gives further insight into farming and developmental capabilities of the various soils found in Watson Township. The analysis shows that the soils throughout most of the Agricultural Conservation District also constrain non-farm use and development. The main limitations are poor drainage, wetness or rapid permeability, all of which contribute to an inability to support conventional on-site septic systems. Many of the Township's productive farmland soils also present significant problems when constructing building foundations, basements and roads.

Only relatively small areas of the Township's best farming areas are also naturally conducive to supporting septic systems and building structures. Most of those areas are loosely congregated in the north west in sections 8, and 17, in the north in parts of sections 3, 4, 9 and 10 and in more widely scattered areas in the east central sections. Many of those areas have already witnessed a good deal of land fragmentation and rural development and have thus been excluded from the Agricultural Conservation District.

The recommended mechanisms for achieving the objectives of the Agricultural Conservation District include:

- **Use of Effective Zoning Techniques:** The continued use of existing sliding scale zoning regulations that limit the scale of development and that treat farming and farm related activities as the primary land use is recommended as the basic zoning tool in this district.

Fluctuating market conditions often force farmers to look for alternative sources of income and many count on the ability to sell off land for non-farm uses to augment finances. This ability is restricted under current zoning and only one form of clustering is allowable under the Township's "Open Space Preservation Project". The Township's "Conservation Subdivision PUD" provisions offer another clustering option that could be considered and implemented in the Agricultural Conservation Planning District (A-1 Zoning district) should additional flexibility

become warranted. If the additional clustering option is to be implemented, stringent buffering parameters coupled with bonus density provisions that maintain gross density at less than one dwelling per ten acres are recommended. Farmland and open space that is preserved under either of the two clustering options will be incorporated into the Townships “Designated Open Space Zoning District (DOS).

- Another flexible zoning tool is the use of Planned Unit Development provisions that enable farmland located in one area of the Township to be counted as the required open space element of a development located in another part of the Township. This ability for farmers to transfer their development rights is a technique that is specifically enabled in the zoning enabling act and the Watson Township Zoning ordinance.
- Voluntary Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs. Participation by farmers in State and County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs which enable farmers to offer the sale of their development rights to the County and State. This voluntary program will enable some landowners to retain their land for continued farming while receiving cash payments for the sale of their non-farm development rights. While all lands within the Agricultural Conservation Planning District are intended to be eligible for the protection under these programs, funding limitations are expected to make the programs competitive in nature. Property that is nearest areas designated for future non-farm development are in theory at greater risk for development pressures and may be expected to be given a higher relative priority for PDR funding. Additional discussion pertaining to the Township’s PDR policies is included in the discussion on *Voluntary Farmland and Rural Preservation Efforts* found in this Chapter.

Rural Preservation Planning District (A-2)

The intent of this planning district is to define areas where the overall long term character remains predominantly rural, regardless of the uses that might occur there. The district corresponds to the A-2 Rural Conservation Zoning District. Farming operations are expected to continue and development will occur in the form of individual lot splits and multi-lot subdivision developments. Care will be taken in the planning and design of the major development to ensure that the site layout will have minimized impacts on adjacent farming operations, natural features and surrounding properties. This will be accomplished through zoning standards that protect natural features, create appropriate setbacks and buffers along the roadways and which impose minimum open space set asides.

Zoning district provisions will provide for very low density, rural estate residential development either on large lots or on smaller clustered home sites. An area-wide gross density of approximately one unit per five or more acres is intended. Agricultural operations and activities are also envisioned to continue but are not necessarily viewed as the long term or permanent land

use.

The Rural Preservation (RP) planning district recognizes a category of homebuyers that desire a rural environment in relatively close proximity to urban amenities. At the same time, this land category will encourage the preservation of wetlands, woodlands, and other open spaces, which are useful as water retention and ground water recharge, and habitat for wildlife. As a basic development option in the RP areas, large lot parcel splits will provide adequate area for septic system placement and will create fewer non-farm activities and conflict points next to active farms than if more traditional one or two acre lots were to be accommodated. Zoning provisions that require the clustering of smaller home sites as an alternative to large lot zoning are already in place. This technique can be more beneficial to the environment; can be helpful in preserving the integrity of neighboring farm operations and for preserving rural character.

The factors considered in establishing the general boundaries and locations of the various Rural Preservation District areas include the lack of sewer and water utilities, a close relationship and proximity to active farmland, the existence of soils that are unsuitable to support intensive development due to septic system and building construction limitations and an extensive pattern of rural residential land fragmentation. These factors establish the RP district as not generally suitable for intensive development and less suitable for long-term investment in farming than those areas included in the Agricultural Conservation planning district.

Recommendations for implementing the open space objectives and one dwelling unit per five acre density of the RP planning district include:

- Continue to rely on existing large lot (5 acres) zoning as the basis for determining the overall density for the district.
- Through flexible open space and PUD standards encourage residential cluster developments.
- Limit the creation of new subdivision developments unless the development meets clustering (increased net density), common utility and preserved open space criteria.

Voluntary Farmland and Rural Preservation Efforts

In addition to the regulatory efforts employed by the Township to conserve farmland and rural character within the Agricultural/Open Space district and very Low Density Residential Districts there are a number of ways that property owners can insure that parcels of land will remain undeveloped or reserved for specific purposes. In doing so the landowner could, depending on

the method, obtain potential property tax, income tax, inheritance tax and/or estate tax benefits.

Among the preservation and conservation methods are:

Land Donations. A donation of land entails the direct transfer of property to another party, usually an organization that is capable of keeping and maintaining the property. It could be a governmental unit such as the County, or Township, a land trust, school or a nonprofit organization.

Private Deed Restrictions. Voluntary deed restrictions can be placed on the property deed which limits or releases certain property rights, such as the right to develop a parcel of land, or which prohibits the new owner from destroying or modifying natural features.

Conservation Easements. A conservation easement is a less than fee simple interest in the land that is donated or sold by a landowner to a second or third party such as a County or Township or a nonprofit organization. The effect is that while the private landowner retains the ownership of the some of the rights normally associated with the parcel, some of the rights (such as the development rights) are relinquished to another entity for preservation.

Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act. The Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act, commonly referred to as P.A. 116, offers certain income and property tax reductions for landowners who are willing to agree that their farmland or open space will not be developed for a specified period of time.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR). Participation in the state and county Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs enable farmers to offer the sale of their development rights to the county and state. This voluntary program will enable some landowners to retain their land for continued farming while receiving cash payments for the sale of their non-farm development rights. Because funding is limited, enrollments are awarded on the basis of a competitive ranking system. The Township's declared support of enrollment applications is therefore critical to the programs local success. To that end, the "Agricultural Preservation District" within Watson Township (as referred to in the Allegan County Farmland Preservation Board's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) application) is represented by the combined areas of the Agricultural Conservation and Rural Preservation planning districts.

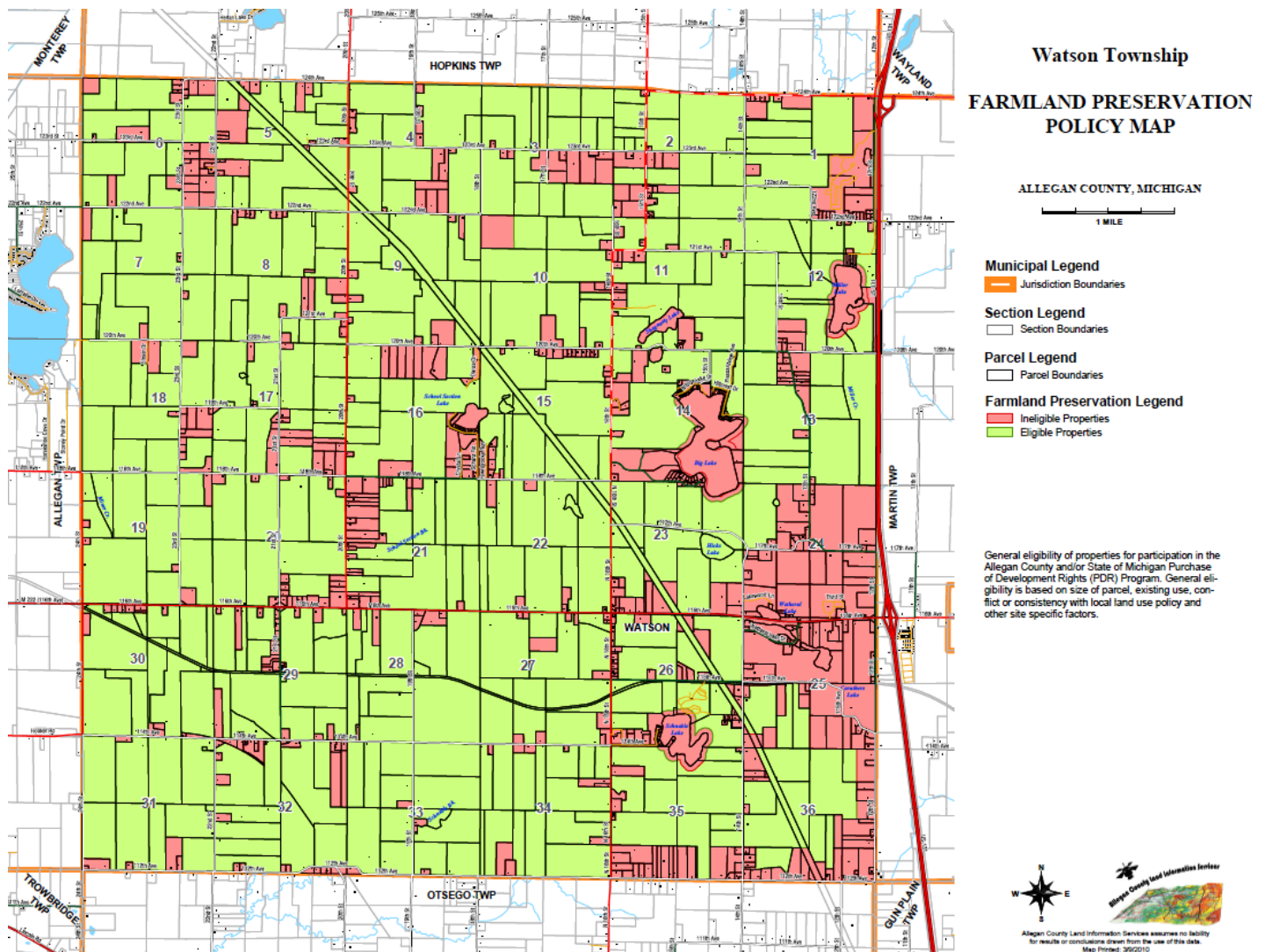
Parcels of property that exceed the 20 acres, are zoned A-1 or A-2 and are located within either the Agricultural Conservation or Rural Preservation planning districts (as shown on the Future Land Use Map), are as a matter of Township policy, eligible for inclusion in the PDR program. Due however, to land use patterns, soil and topographic constraints and other growth factors within these two districts there are isolated parcels that should not be given serious consideration for development rights purchase. The properties having low probability for consideration are defined as follows:

- a. Parcels of property not zoned in a district that allows farming as a principal permitted use.
- b. Parcels of property less than 20 acres in size that are not adjacent to another large farm tract.

A low probability parcel may also be larger than 20 acres if it exhibits a combination of two or more of the following characteristics:

- It is predominated by soils that are generally considered unsuitable for farming due to slope, wetness or flooding.
- It is predominated by woodland and is located in a flood plain area where the introduction of farm practices could pose a threat to surface water quality.
- Significant land fragmentation has already isolated the parcel.

Voluntary Zoning. The Townships “Designated Open Space Zoning District(DOS)” designation is also offered to landowners who wish to voluntarily zone their property for very limited farming and open space use. This zoning designation is automatically applied to preserved farmland and open spaces created as a result of approved residential cluster developments but is also available to other properties at least ten acres in size which meet certain voluntary eligibility requirements.



Low and Medium Density Single Family Residential

The current zoning map of the Township indicates various areas of R-1 Low density Residential and R-2 Medium Density Residential. It is the intent of this plan that the existing R-1 and R-2 Districts remain but that no new R-1 or R-2 Districts be created unless they are located within Residential Transition Area (RTA) discussed later in this chapter.

Lake Residential (LR)

The Lake Residential area is a Medium Density Residential District devoted exclusively to Single Family Residential use in the waterfront and outdoor recreation environment afforded by School Section Lake, Big Lake, Miller Lake and Schnable Lake. The planning district corresponds with the LR Lake Residential Zoning District. There are several smaller lakes located in the township where the LR designation has not been applied. For the smaller lakes a combination of factors suggest that the intensity of development near should be limited in order to minimize the potential for their degradation. For most of the smaller lakes the limiting factors include their relatively small size and recreational carrying capacity and environmentally sensitive shorelines. For others, inaccessibility and existing land use patterns warrant their inclusion in the Rural Preservation planning district

Commercial Land Use

Commercial establishments typically seek out major streets with high traffic volumes to maximize their visibility and encourage drive-in trade. When a major street begins to develop commercially however, traffic congestion too often occurs and conflicts result between through traffic and the vehicles entering and exiting business driveways.

The Master Plan recognizes that the demand for development property to support a variety of commercial uses is likely to increase over time. These demands will continue to be greatest along the along M-222, and near the expressway interchanges. Commercial development areas are accommodated in these areas within the Mixed Use Transitional Areas (MUTA) through the designation of a commercial node at the intersection of M-222 and 24th Street and through the use of a limited “Rural Arterial Small Businesses Overlay District”. The objectives of the Commercial Land Use Plan are to:

1. Accommodate commercial facilities that provide sufficient amounts of goods and services to meet the daily needs of a growing township population while not duplicating services provided by establishments already located nearby.

2. To promote the physical clustering of commercial establishments rather than strip development, thereby providing for joint use of parking facilities, more convenient shopping, and minimized extension of utilities as they are needed.

Rural Arterial Small Businesses Overlay District

There is recognition that service businesses are increasingly attracted to the higher traffic volumes occurring along the M-222 corridor. If allowed to occur in a controlled fashion, such businesses can bring added convenience to rural residents and value to the agricultural community. Several alternatives to strip development exist that can be used to control the nature of development along this highway and to preserve some of the defined rural characteristics of the corridor. The land use concepts to be used along these corridors include:

- The allowance of limited commercial nodes adjacent to key high traffic intersections where local service and “heavy” types of commercial business could be located.
- Utilization of a corridor overlay policy to allow limited forms of service and retail businesses to locate within the corridor under stringent location and performance standards.

A small commercial node is proposed for intersections of 124 St and M-222. This intersection is intended to support local service and convenience types of uses such as convenience stores and local “heavy” commercial service uses such as auto repair and welding shops and equipment dealers. Such uses will be expected to adhere to access and site design standards that will enhance property values and minimize traffic conflicts.

Properties within both the Agricultural Conservation and Rural Preservation Districts having direct frontage on M-222 are included within the Rural Arterial Business Overlay. Otherwise intended to be farmed or support rural residential use, a limited number of properties within the Rural Arterial Business Overlay may be allowed to support some business uses. Uses contemplated include small, single offices, veterinary clinics, antique shops and farm support businesses. Once the overlay is implemented, these types of uses could be accommodated under a special use approval process that would for example allow the conversion of existing structures to the new proposed use. The provisions could also control the number and location of businesses in the overlay so as to retain the rural density and character of the majority of the corridor.

The concept of small, rural business development is often desired by residents who desire to

preserve the rural character of the Township and who see the importance of preserving traditional farmsteads as key to the overall rural character. The adaptive reuse of existing farmstead buildings in the support of small rural businesses is one way of combining the two objectives. Properly regulated, the concept will be a useful way to promote a continuation of the farmstead as physical feature of the landscape. The Master Plan therefore supports the use of special use provisions that allow the adaptive reuse of certain existing underutilized farm buildings for the purpose of supporting small service and manufacturing enterprises within the overlay concept. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that the location and scale of allowed operations will not jeopardize nearby property other stated land use goals.

Commercial Design Standards

Unless careful site planning and access controls are utilized, conflicts between uses can occur, opportunities for integrated uses lost, and the capacity of streets can be greatly reduced. It is recommended that site plans and the rezoning of land designated on the Future Land Use Map for commercial purposes be done cautiously to help assure that development is not done prematurely or haphazardly, with disregard for the lack of utilities, adjacent existing uses or those that will develop later, on an adjoining site. Implementation of the commercial land use plan should therefore include the following recommendations:

1. Encouragement of the use of flexible planned unit development zoning provisions allow the review and approval of proposals that incorporate integrated mixed uses, joint access and alternate access characteristics.
2. Knowledgeable use of zoning standards and the site plan review process. The Site plan review process should be used to promote land use and transportation objectives and the quality of such site plan features such as;
 - a. Wastewater collection and storm drainage: Unless public sewer and engineered drainage systems are provided, intensive development should not be permitted and the potential range of commercial uses should be limited.
 - b. Driveway Location and Spacing: Driveways should be located as far from street intersections as possible to avoid left turn conflicts and businesses should be encouraged to use joint driveways whenever possible. Driveways should be spaced to reduce conflicts and provide gaps in traffic for safer ingress and egress. To promote adequate driveway spacing, commercial parcels located on arterial streets have a minimum of 200 feet of street frontage.
 - c. Landscaping: Commercial Development should provide landscaping along the street edge to enhance aesthetics and screen parking areas. Specific landscaping requirements should be maintained in the zoning ordinance for use in ensuring adequate and uniform landscape treatment among businesses.

- d. Alternate Access: Wherever possible a secondary means of ingress and/or egress should be provided. For corner parcels, alternate access could take the form of access to an intersecting street. For interior parcels access across adjacent parking lots, access to another street to the rear of the property, a frontage road or service drive parallel to a major street are desired alternatives.
- e. Signs: The number, size and location of signs should be controlled and kept to a reasonable minimum to avoid motorist confusion and to insure individual business identities.
- f. Pedestrian Access: Where appropriate, sidewalks or pathways should be provided to link businesses with each other and residential areas.

Industrial Land Use

While industry is important to a diversified tax base and for providing local employment opportunities, good planning dictates that industrial areas have good highway access and are situated to minimize potential conflicts with residential uses. Generally, businesses involved with manufacturing, processing and fabrication should be supported by adequate sewer and water utilities. Because of accessibility and infrastructure limits the only industrial area indicated on the Future Land Use Map is the existing industrial zone found in Sections 24. If justified, industrial district expansions will be expected to occur within the Mixed Use Transitional Area designation nearest the M-222/US-131 interchange.

Transitional Planning Districts

The Future Land Use Map identifies several transitional areas where land use change will ultimately be facilitated should infrastructure improvements capable of supporting more intensive economic development come about. The areas are related directly to the two expressway interchanges. Public utilities or the lack thereof are a major consideration. The transitional areas at or near M-222 are situated where (at least proximally), future public utility extensions might be extended from the nearby existing public systems (Village of Martin). There have been previous investigations into such extensions and it could be envisioned that future population increases and economic development pressures might one day justify extensions into Watson Township. Since the extension would be predicated upon treatment capacity owned the City of Plainwell, as well as transmission capacity controlled by both Martin Township and Gun Plain Township, the prospects of such are not high at this time. In any event, the extension of public sewer into Watson Township is not likely to occur or be justified within the immediate (five year) planning period. Also not expected are the public funds needed to significantly

expand police and fire protection or to make the street improvements necessary to support major economic development in the interchange areas.

The primary function of the Transitional Areas illustrated on the Future Land Use Map is therefore to identify “holding zones” for lands that may ultimately be the most suitable for more intensive development. Unless already zoned to an alternate designation, zoning in the transitional areas will in the short range consist of R-2 and the current Commercial and Industrial Zoning designations. However, In farming and low intensity residential development transitional areas are not necessarily considered to be the ultimate long-term uses.

The transitional area planning districts are thus aimed at establishing “land banks” for land uses that may ultimately be allowed to occur when the Township determines that more intensive structural development is appropriate and when the necessary utility, street infrastructure and emergency and protective services are in place to support it.

Following are general descriptions and rationale for each of the identified Sub-areas. Included is a listing of the range of uses contemplated within each sub-area.

Mixed Use Transitional Areas (MUTA)

Both US-131 interchanges have been included within a mixed use MUTA sub-area. These sub-areas encompass most of the existing commercial and industrial zoning within the township and each are sized to accommodate fairly substantial amounts of economic development in the future. Each interchange area has the advantage of easy accessibility to the expressway and excellent highway visibility. Soils are poorly suited for development without utilities; however, and unimproved local roads are limiting factors.

Because of excellent highway visibility, two of the three MUTA areas are attractive to land speculators. In the north MUTA at 124th Avenue and US-131, only the area in the immediate vicinity of the interchange is programmed for change and until the necessary infrastructure is in place, development will be discouraged. Once the infrastructure is in place the following range of uses will be considered.

- General, neighborhood and regional oriented businesses
- Light industrial
- Hospitality service business (hotels, restaurants)

It is obvious that the US-131/M-222 MUTA sub-area holds the potential for accommodating the majority of the future commercial and industrial concentrations in the township. It is desired that this growth be programmed within an overall development scheme and that it creates a welcoming gateway to the Township. The PUD approach is therefore the desired tool to be used to obtain a desirable mix of uses and quality of character. Due to the fragmented nature of landownership and zoning the Township will also employ conventional commercial and industrial zoning designations in the area. The following range of uses will be considered in the

southern MUTA.

- General, neighborhood and regional oriented businesses
- Light industrial
- Hospitality service business (hotels, restaurants)
- Manufactured home community (40 to 80 acres)
- Multi-family residential

The third MUTA is located along 12th Street, across the road from the US-131 Motorsports Park. This area is identified as a transitional area due to the conflicts of noise and traffic caused by the motor sports park and the negative influences that these impacts will have on existing area home values. The Master Plan recognizes and anticipates that over time, many of the existing residential properties fronting 12th Street between 112th Avenue and 114th Avenue will transition to local service type business uses and/or businesses that rely on the motor sport facility.

Residential Transitional Area (RTA)

The RTA area is located in the US-131/M-222 interchange area west of the Mixed Use Transition Area and extends southward. It encompasses numerous existing single family residences and nearby vacant land in close proximity to the motor sports area in adjacent Martin Township. The intent is to allocate an appropriately sized area capable of supporting medium density single family residential to higher density attached and multi-family residential expansions in proximity to other areas of planned higher land use intensity and potential utility extensions. The envisioned mix of uses includes low and medium density single family residential subdivisions (R-1 and R-2) as well as alternative medium density home styles such as senior citizen housing, attached three-plexes, four-plexes and multi-family residences and/or a manufactured home community.

Public/Semi Public (Various Zoning Districts)

This category includes areas and facilities such as schools, government buildings, parks, and golf courses which are available for use by the general public. Semi-public uses are those used by a limited number of people with specific interests which are generally non-profit in nature such as churches, non-public schools, private golf courses and medical or institutional facilities. The Plan recognizes that it is necessary to provide for the establishment of certain non-residential land uses within residential areas subject to the implementation of measures designed to insure compatibility. Such non-residential uses commonly include religious and educational institutions, recreational uses such as parks, and play fields, and public utility facilities.

Traffic generation, noise, lighting and trespassing should be carefully controlled in order to mitigate the negative impacts on residential uses. At this time the Future Land Use Map does not include any specific locations for these uses. Future locations should however be considerate of compatibility with adjacent land uses and the extent to which neighborhood character will be

maintained.

Transportation

All of the existing public roads in the Township (except local neighborhood roads) are handling more traffic demands than ten years ago and will be expected to carry still higher traffic loads during the coming years as the Township continues to grow. The following generalized transportation related recommendations are intended to address existing problems and to avoid problems in the future:

1. Development along arterial and collector roads, especially access by individual driveways, should be limited. New subdivision roads (both public and private) accessing the collector and arterial roads should be planned for interconnectivity and reviewed for safe sight distance, proper acceleration and deceleration lane tapers and any left hand turn problems that may occur.
2. Establish road improvement priorities. Through cooperation with the Allegan County Road Commission, monitor traffic volumes and road conditions as part of an ongoing program that establishes road improvement priorities. In this way, the Township and County can objectively allocate limited resources to those areas having the greatest need.

Watson Township

Official FUTURE LAND USE MAP

12/10/2009

ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

1 MILE

All Land Use Maps are subject to change.
Check with local unit for updates.

Future Land Use Designations

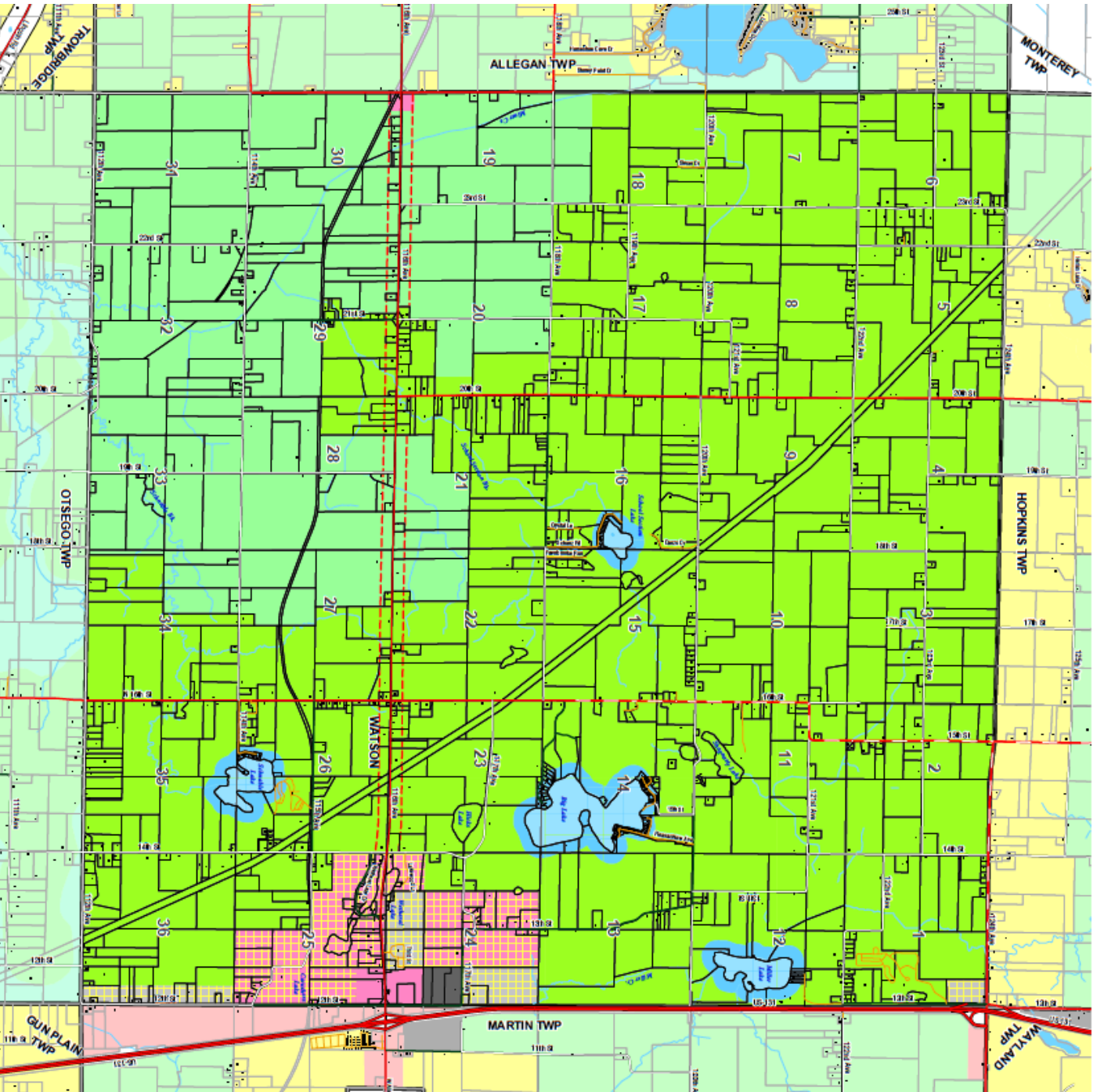
LAND USE DESIGNATION	ACREAGE % AREA
Agricultural Conservation	5,627.8 24.6
Commercial	83.2 4
Industrial	40.8 2
Urban Residential	360.8 1.6
Wild Use Transitional Area	274.1 1.2
Rural Preservation	16,784.7 88.5
Residential Transitional Area	716.1 3.1
	23,026.8

Generalized Land Use Designations for Adjacent Jurisdictions

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Government
- Industrial
- Open Space
- Residential
- Right of Way
- Rural
- Water

Future Landuse Overlay Distric

- Rural Arterial Small Business Overlay



Future Land Use Map by:
LandMark Strategies, 110 Fremont St. NE, Grand Rapids MI 49503



Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability
for results or conclusions drawn from the use of this data.
Map Printed: 01/15/2010

3. Consider the ability of existing roadway conditions to handle projected traffic volumes resulting from new development when reviewing rezoning requests, special land uses and PUDs.
4. Implement the Land Use Recommendations. The Master Plan's land use recommendations have taken into account the adequacy of the existing roadway system. Taken collectively, the incremental implementation of the various land use proposals could over the long term, minimize the need for some road improvements.
5. Private road regulations. The interconnectivity of the street network should be analyzed prior to the authorization of new private streets. The Township should reserve the right to require private street interconnectivity and/or the creation of a public street where the logical extension of a public street or interconnectivity of streets is judged necessary to maintaining the safety and capacity of that nearby collector and arterial streets.

The problems of strip commercial development have been well documented over the years. A multitude of commercial uses, each with its own driveway or driveways, creates traffic congestion problems, turning movement problems, and increases the likelihood of accidents. Apart from a recommended geographic allocation of land uses in response to existing and preferred development patterns, the Plan recognizes the need for access control measures along the M-222 corridor and other primary arterials. The following recommendations are geared toward those concerns.

1. *Access Controls.* Access control standards have been adopted to regulate and coordinate access to undeveloped land along the Township's major roads. These standards will address such items as driveway placement, width and number; acceleration and deceleration lanes; driveway distance from intersections; joint driveways; frontage roads and service drives; and pedestrian movement. In implementing the access control regulations, the Township must enlist the support and cooperation of Allegan County Road Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation officials in reviewing site plans for new development.

Complete Streets

Michigan Public Act 135 defines complete streets as, "...roadway planning, designed, and constructed to provide appropriate access to all legal users in a manner that promotes safe and efficient movement of people and goods whether by car, truck, transit, assistive devices, foot or bicycle." Complete streets are planned, designed, operated and maintained such that all users may safely, comfortably and conveniently move along and across streets throughout a community. Communities across the United States are instituting policies for "Complete Streets"

and provide “roads for all modes.” All modes of transportation may not be appropriate for all of the roads in a community. Establishing a complete streets policy would help ensure that all professional parties involved in designing a roadway with all users in mind, such as bicyclists, pedestrian of all ages and abilities.

Complete streets encourages walking and bicycling for health and to address climate change and our reliance on fossil fuels. These policies may also include providing transportation for those residents that don’t drive. There is no one design recommendation for a community to adopt to be part of the Complete Streets initiative. The components can be made up of, sidewalks, bike lanes, wide shoulders, special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, accessible pedestrian signals and curb extensions. Complete streets policies offer the opportunity to improve travel options of people of all ages. Planning, designing, and building roads with all users in mind will provide older adults a variety of options for getting around, whether walking, taking public transportation, or sharing rides with family and friends. Proven methods to create complete streets for aging pedestrians include retiming signals to account for slower walking speed, constructing median refuges or sidewalk bulb-outs to shorten crossing distances, and installing curb ramps, sidewalk seating, and bus shelters with seating. Improved lighting, signage, and pavement markings are among the measures that benefit drivers of any age, particularly older drivers.

Many local communities have adopted complete streets resolutions or ordinances. The Township can, at the minimum, adopt a resolution of support for complete streets and has the opportunity to work with MDOT and the Road Commission to plan for and implement improvements related to non-motorized facilities, carpooling and pedestrian infrastructure. The list of potential projects might, for example, include installing designated bike lanes along M-222 and 20th Street. In the future, the Township could develop more comprehensive guidelines that specifically address how the Township will integrate complete streets into its plans, policies, and programs.

Natural Systems Plan: Sensitive Environment Overlay Districts

The Master Plan is intended to give policy support for the preservation of natural resources. At the local level there are already in place site plan review standards that can be relied upon to a limited extent to protect important natural features. Additional site plan implementation measures could include the adoption of local wetland protection ordinances and overlay districts that encompass other important natural features such as steep slopes and significant woodland

features that are vital to sustaining wildlife. Once embodied as regulated features these attributes will be significant factors in review and authorization of development projects required to have open space set-asides. Farmers will generally be exempt from the zoning regulations but implementation measures will also include educational efforts to encourage farmers to use best management practices near watercourses.

The major elements of the environment that could be protected in overlay fashion along with suggested parameters of regulation include:

Wetlands

Land development adjacent to wetlands should be discouraged from making earth and drainage changes that impair the wetlands. Boundaries of wetland areas in each development should be clearly defined.

- Where practical, a buffer zone of 50 or more feet should be required between any disturbed area and the perimeter of the wetland.
- When faced with adjacent development, whenever possible wetlands should be included in common, protected open space elements of developments. Lot lines for platted lots or site condominium unit boundaries should be allowed to project into a regulated wetland.
- Closed storm drains should not be permitted to discharge directly to any wetland area.

Shorelines:

Protecting the remaining undeveloped shoreline of the township's several inland lakes is an important objective. As such, the following guidelines will be considered:

- Establishment of a natural buffer strip, extending 50 or more feet landward from the established shoreline.
- Tree clearing, earth changes or structures should be discouraged within the 50 foot wide buffer strip, excepting seasonal boat docks that may be permitted by the MDEQ.
- Whenever shoreline involves steep banks (slopes in excess of 12%) and elevation of 20 or more feet above the water elevation, development nearby should be evaluated for purposes of determining how best to preserve the shoreline's natural environment and views. In any event, clearing of existing trees and disturbance of vegetation will not be permitted within the required setbacks.

Unique Habitats:

Development on sites where there is evidence of unique animal habitat or protected flora and fauna should be preceded by a professional habitat survey. In some cases, such areas may be

protected by Federal or State law and will require participation from the regulatory agency. In others, such habitat or plant life may not be otherwise protected but will require protection by regulation of the Township. Guidelines for unique habitats include:

- Whenever the Commission believes unique animal habitat or flora and fauna exists on the proposed development site, it will require a professional survey of wildlife and plant life on the premises.
- Any such area identified on premises, if considered unique by the Commission or the area of species appear on the Federal endangered or threatened species list, the area in which such habitat or plant life exists will be excluded from the development project.
- The Commission should consider establishing specific design treatment and measures to effect protection of these areas. In some cases, these areas may be deeded to a land conservation group or placed in public ownership.

Woodlands:

Woodlands are an important natural element within the Township. As such, it is necessary to establish policies to limit tree clearing from land development sites. Sites with five or more acres of contiguous woodland will be addressed using the following policies:

- Plans for all new residential sites and locations of buildings for non-residential development should depict boundaries of existing woodlots and proposed tree clearing in relation to new roads, proposed building footprints, home sites, drainage areas and any removal occasioned by earth changes.
- For wooded sites of five or more acres, tree clearing should not exceed fifty percent of the total area of the woodlands.
- For all forms of subdivisions, preservation of remaining woodlands shall be included in the proposed set of deed restrictions as applied to all home sites and common areas.

Each of the above types of resources are important as individual components but when combined they become exponentially significant as the overall natural resource system. Their preservation in a continuous or nearly continuous “greenway corridor” pattern can be very effective in maximizing their benefits. They should be highest priority for preservation efforts such as land acquisition, purchase of development rights, open space (cluster) development and conservation easements. When reviewing development proposals, design standards can also be used to ensure that development in and near these important natural areas respect the natural systems.

The following guidelines can be used in establishing site development standards for the protection of natural systems:

1. Incorporate significant natural resources, cultural features and important destinations within the community into a Greenways Plan.

2. Utilize the Greenways Plan as a mechanism to conserve valuable natural resources.
3. Accommodate pathways within areas of the greenway system that are suitable for development and open space connections through sensitive segments of the system.
4. Integrate the Greenways Plan with the Pathways Plan to maximize connection opportunities.
5. Build relationships with individuals, public agencies and private groups for planning, financing and implementing the Greenways Plan.
6. Coordinate with private land developers to ensure new development respects the planned system through conservation easements, required open space, clustering options and setbacks.
7. Promote efforts to link greenways in Watson Township with those in adjoining communities.
8. Require subdivision and non-residential development proposals to provide an environmental impact assessment to determine the effect(s) the proposed development may have on various environmental features in the vicinity of the proposed development. The environmental impact assessment may be required to include a natural features inventory based on Department of Natural Resources (DNR) guidelines.
9. Development should maintain existing unbroken hedgerows (fence rows). Additional plantings of similar species should be provided where significant gaps in a hedgerow appear. Where it is not feasible to maintain a continuous hedgerow plantings should be used elsewhere on the property to mitigate the loss.
10. Residential clustering is encouraged in situations where important natural features can be protected and that would otherwise be impacted from a conventional form of residential development.
11. Encourage use of Farmland and Open Space Preservation Programs (P.A. 116), conservation easements and other methods to protect lands with important natural features.
12. Require subdivision and non-residential development storm water management facilities (detention and retention) to create ecosystems through the use of native plants. Require the developer and homeowners association to commit to a monitoring and management plan that runs at least three to five years after completion of planting. Preferably there should be an on-going maintenance program established by the developer and homeowners association.
13. Obtain public control of greenway segments through property acquisition and easements.

Mineral Resources

By its very nature, surface mining of sand and gravel is a high impact land use. Equipment

noises, truck movements and blowing dust each represent nuisances for adjacent residences. Other important operational and management issues include: the depth of excavation or the “pit floor” elevation relative to groundwater (assurance of adequate “freeboard” is important), methods and quantities of on site processing to be done (stone crushing & screening), sand and sediment spillage on paved roadways, wear and tear on roadways, public safety (pits are often considered “attractive nuisances”) and site reclamation and reuse. In addition, operating hours and child safety are often among the most critical issues when the mines are in close proximity to homes.

Whenever a mining extraction operation is proposed or an existing operation is expanded, adjacent lands are impacted. Extraction uses have high nuisance characteristics and as such, they create negative conditions that tend to discourage new development nearby. Siting issues, including the location of access, relative grades, sight lines, buffer areas, the size and intensity of the operation, and the duration of the operation are all significant matters that must be addressed to help minimize potential impacts on surroundings. When evaluating mining operations, the following guidelines are applicable:

1. Zoning decisions regarding mineral extraction should be supported by:
 - Careful and thorough analysis,
 - Findings of fact relative to the need to extract the resource and its impacts,
 - Precisely written and easy to enforce conditions that govern the operations.
2. New operations should be required to be within ½ mile of a county primary road or a Class A, All-Weather Road. Where the site does not directly access a county primary or a Class A road, the intermediate roadway should be brought up to at least the standard for paved local county roads by the mine operator before commencement of mining activity. If not brought up to the Class A standards, all road segments used by the operation should be utilized as “seasonal only” with seasonal load restrictions.

Wind Energy

Wind Energy Systems (WES). There are some areas of Allegan County where the development of large-scale WES appears to be fairly well suited. There are two major factors that could favor their development. The most important factor is of course wind availability (steady, relatively high winds) and the second is the absence of extensive development such as is found in agricultural areas. Where the two factors are found in concert, the potential for WES development is highest.

Analysis of these two factors and other known physical limitations can be used to create a WES overlay analysis to help identify the potential that an area may have for supporting commercial or utility scale WES. The Agricultural land use pattern that is represented by the Agricultural Conservation and Rural Preservation Planning Districts, coupled with wind availability assessment maps and other physical features limitations.

Wind Availability

The US Department of Energy’s Wind Energy Program and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory have created a series of wind resource maps for the state of Michigan. One of the resource maps shows wind power estimates at 50 meters (approximately 165 feet) above ground and identifies the areas that might hold potential for commercial scale WES development. The maps classify the wind according to “wind power” based on prevailing wind speeds. The classes

range from class 1(poor) to class 7(superb). Wind classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 are as a group considered good resources, Class 3 is fair, Class 2 is marginal and Class 1 is poor. The “50 Meter Wind Power Map” indicates that there are some Class 3 areas in Ganges and Saugatuck townships, near the Lake Michigan shoreline. If other factors are also favorable, the class # resource areas in those townships may be suitable for utility scale WES development. In Watson Township the highest wind resource is classification is Class 2 or “marginal”. The Class 2 areas mostly consist of the hills found in the north central and northeastern portion of the Township.

Undeveloped areas

Agricultural areas are generally supportive of wind turbines as an alternative energy source because they are generally more isolated from intensive non-farm development. Isolation in turn may represent lower land values and improve the financial feasibility of holding large tracts of land needed for wind farms. Such areas are found in the south, west and northwest portions of Watson Township.

Limiting factors

Several factors can limit the wind power class/Agricultural Conservation-Rural Preservation Overlay strategy. These factors will assist in identifying “potential” sites using the overlay approach:

1. **Tree Cover Areas:** Areas of extensive tree cover are less suited to development of alternative energy resources (WES’s) because, generally, these areas have less open areas with less wind volume. Encouraging wind turbine development in heavily treed areas may also precipitate removal of existing vegetation to increase the efficiency of the generators. These areas are less suited for agricultural use and, assuming the soil conditions support development, are often more suitable for residential or other nonagricultural land use.
2. **Wetland Areas:** Wetland areas are considered environmentally sensitive, and generally speaking, very limited development is allowed in these areas.
3. **Proximity to Airports:** According to information from the Federal Aviation Administration, any tall structure (greater than 200 feet in height) requires FAA approval. Further, towers less than 300 feet above ground level located closer than four nautical miles from an airport are considered an obstruction to air navigation and may require, on a case-by-case basis, “obstruction lighting”. Obstruction lighting techniques need to be reviewed when located near residential areas due to its negative impact. Therefore, areas within 4 nautical miles of an airport are considered a limitation. Portions of the agricultural area located in the southeastern portion of the Township are within 4 nautical miles of the Allegan airport.

These limitations affect certain parcels to a greater extent than others; and as a result some of the factors are more limiting than others.

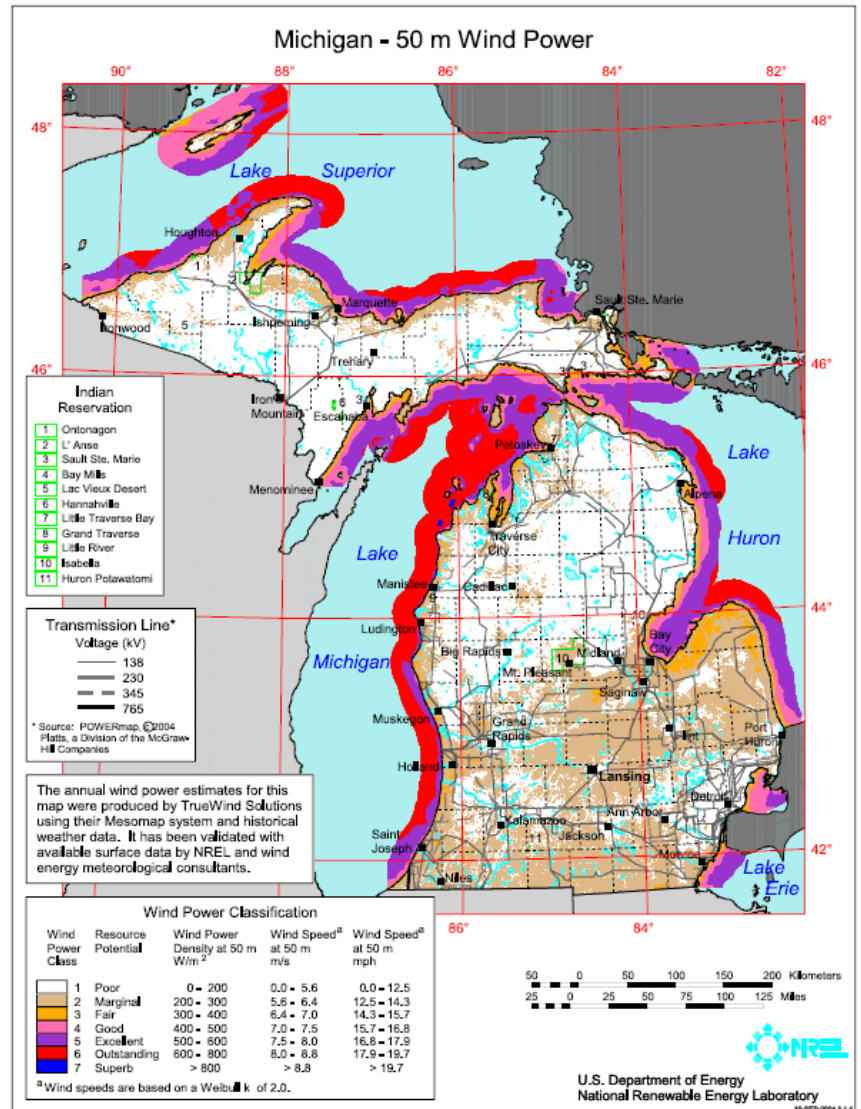
The overlay approach couples the township’s agricultural land use pattern with wind availability assessment maps and the above listed physical limitations. The analysis indicates that there are few if any locations in Watson Township that are favorable as locations for utility scale WES.

Small-scale WES

Small-scale WES can be installed and used by individual landowners to offset the amount of the electricity taken from the utility grid system. Just as future technological improvements may increase the potential for large-scale WES, the technology for small-scale systems is improving rapidly and as the technology improves and the costs go down, the use of small-scale WES is increasing within rural areas as well as in developed residential and business areas. As a result, the effects of an increased number of small-scale WES has become a contemporary zoning issue relating directly to public safety, nuisance (noise) aesthetics and property values. Many communities have therefore found it necessary to address WES from a local regulatory standpoint.

WES Policy

The Master Plan recommends that the Township adopt a basic set of standards and regulations governing both large-scale WES and small-scale WES. The regulations should be based upon contemporary standards of the industry. Utility-scale systems development should be focused on the less developed AC and RP planning Districts where land use compatibility will be less of an issue. Small-scale systems should be permitted only in settings where large lots can be used to ensure adequate setbacks from homes and other neighboring uses that are sensitive to noise and visual impacts.



Chapter 8

IMPLEMENTATION

In order for the Master Plan to serve as an effective guide for the controlled development of Watson Township, it must be implemented. Primary responsibility for implementing the Plan rests with the Watson Township Board, the Planning Commission and the Township staff. This is done through a number of methods including the adoption and enforcement ordinances, capital improvement programs and cooperation and partnerships with other public agencies and the private sector and administrative procedures.

The Master Plan itself is not a regulatory device. The implementation of the plan must occur as the result of regulatory, policy, and capital improvement decisions of the Township Board and Planning Commission relative to land use and public land acquisition. Private citizens, including individual home, business and landowners are also involved in fulfilling the recommendations of the Master Plan by the actual physical development of land uses and through the rezoning of land. The authority for this, however, comes from the Township Board. Cooperation between the public and private citizens, including developers, is therefore important in the successful implementation of the Master Plan.

Zoning and Related Land Development Regulations

Zoning is a legal mechanism used to regulate private property for the purpose of achieving orderly land use relationships. Zoning is the process most commonly used to implement community master plans. The zoning process consists of an official zoning map and zoning ordinance text. The official zoning map divides the community into different zones or districts within which certain uses are permitted and others are not. The zoning ordinance text identifies the uses which are permitted and establishes regulations to control densities, height, bulk, setbacks, lot sizes and accessory uses. Among other things the zoning ordinance can also be used to set forth procedures and regulations for identified special land uses and for addressing special areas of concern such as signs, private roads and resource removal. These measures permit the Township to control the quality as well as the type of development. Other land development regulations include Subdivision and Site Condominium Control Ordinances; land division ordinances, junk and blight ordinances.

Along with the recommendations contained in the Future Land Use Chapter, specific

implementation measures, including several changes to the zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map are outlined in the Goals and Policies Chapter of this plan and the revisions will be needed if the recommendations of the Plan are carried out. Subsequent to the adoption of this Plan, the Township Planning Commission and Township Board will be charged with making the appropriate revisions to the Township's zoning regulations and to other development standards.

Prepare and Adopt a Capital Improvements Program

Capital Improvements Programming (CIP) is the first step in a comprehensive management system designed to match capital improvement priorities and other Township sponsored programs to community's goals and objectives. It is also a tool used to plan for the funding and implementation of major construction and land acquisition activities. The typical CIP is six years in length and is updated yearly. The first year in each CIP contains the capital improvement budget. The program generally includes a survey of the long-range needs of the entire governmental unit, covering major planned projects along with their expected cost and the relative priority of each. The Township Board then analyzes the project's financing options and the interrelationship between projects. Finally, a project schedule is developed. High priority projects are included in the Capital Improvements Program. Low priority projects may be retained in a longer range Capital Improvements Schedule which may cover as long as 20 years.

The CIP is useful to the Township, private utilities, citizens and investors, since it allows or encourages coordination in activities and it provides the public with a view of future expectations.

Recreation Plan

The Master Plan recommends that the Township adopt a recreation plan (which has been implemented) in order to be eligible for state recreation funding programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF). Assistance under these programs is available for planning, acquiring land and developing a wide range of outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The programs are administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and are financed by funds appropriated by the Federal Government and State Legislature. Under the LWCF program, grants of up to 50% of the cost of a project are available; under the MNRTF Program, 100%

funding may be obtained.

Planning Education

Planning Commissions should attend planning seminars and/or enroll in specialized planning commissioner training programs to keep themselves informed of planning issues and learn how to better carry out their duties and responsibilities as Planning Commissioners. Seminars are regularly sponsored by the Michigan Association of Planners (MAP), the Michigan Township Association (MTA) and Allegan County. The MSU Cooperative Extension Program offers a highly regarded “Citizen Planner” training program. All are valuable resources for Planning Commissions. There are also several useful planning publications for Planning Commissioners.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Inter-governmental cooperation on certain land use issues and utility issues can pay dividends to all involved. In an effort to manage growth properly, the Township desires to establish goals and regulations consistent with those of its neighbors so that the immediate area develops in an efficient and compatible manner, without overdevelopment. Watson Township hopes to minimize incompatible land uses across municipal boundaries and to manage growth in such a way that the strengths of each community are taken advantage of and that competition between communities for tax base and economic development dollars is minimized. The implementation of programs or policies resulting from this strategy will necessitate endorsement and support from all jurisdictions involved. This activity must be on-going and includes the notion of collaborating with adjacent communities in areas such as utilities and joint land use planning rather than competing with neighbors for land uses that operate on a regional scale or depend on a large regional market.

Public Information

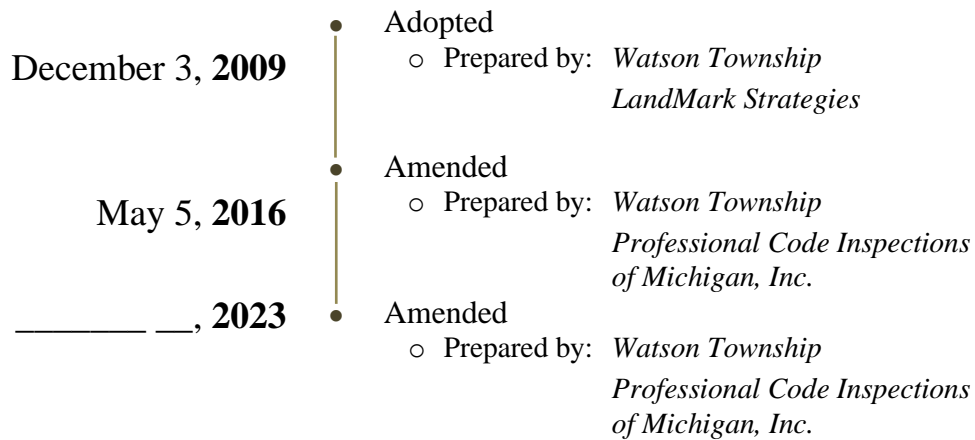
It is important that the proposals of this Plan be discussed and understood by the citizens of Watson Township. Acceptance of this Plan by the public is essential to its successful implementation. Steps should therefore be taken to make Township residents aware of the Master Plan and the continuing activities of the Planning Commission. In large part, this can be accomplished through topical updates to the Township’s internet website and by newspaper reports of Planning Commission activity. Contact with local civic and service organizations is another method which can be used to promote the Township's planning

activities and objectives.

Revisions to the Master Plan

Under Michigan statute, the Master Plan must be reviewed annually and updated every five years. This will keep the plan responsive to new growth trends and current Township citizen attitudes. In the annual and five-year review processes the planning goals, land use information, population projections and other pertinent data should be revised as necessary.

As of the adoption date of this document, the Master Plan has undergone each of the following updates and iterations:



APPENDIX A: MASTER PLAN & PARKS PLAN SURVEY RESULTS, TABULATED

The following appendix illustrates the feedback gathered from citizens and stakeholders of Watson Township through the Watson Township Master Plan and Parks Plan Survey, made available online on March 29, 2022 and comprising twenty-two (22) questions regarding demographics and preferences for use in the development of both the draft Township Master Plan and this plan, jointly. The survey was distributed and open for 115 days, acquiring sixty (60) responses and closing on June 29, 2022.

The results of this survey are detailed below as included below.

Demographics (1 - 9)

Question 1

“What is the status of your residency?”

Response	Percent	Count
Full-time resident (year-round)	93.22%	55
Seasonal resident	3.39%	2
Not a resident	3.39%	2
<i>Total responses:</i>		59

Question 2

**“In which part of the Township do you live?
(Please refer to the map below)”**

Response	Percent	Count
Northeast	35.59%	21
Northwest	18.64%	11
Southeast	25.42%	15
Southwest	16.95%	10
Not a resident (please specify the community in which you reside)	3.39%	2
<i>Total responses:</i>		59

Other Responses: “Martin Township”
“hopkins”

Watson Township
Quadrants
(As included for visual aid with Question 2)



Question 3

“What is your age?”

Response	Percent	Count
18 or under	0.00%	0
19-24	0.00%	0
25-34	6.78%	4
35-44	27.12%	16
45-54	18.64%	11
55-64	30.51%	18
65 or older	16.95%	10
<i>Total responses:</i>		59

Question 4

“How long have you lived in Watson Township?”

Response	Percent	Count
Less than one year	1.69%	1
One to 4 years	11.86%	7
5 to 9 years	13.56%	8
10 to 25 years	32.20%	19
More than 25 years	37.29%	22
Not a resident	3.39%	2
<i>Total responses:</i>		59

Question 5

“In the next five years do you expect to move out of Watson Township?”

Response	Percent	Count
Yes	3.39%	2
No	93.22%	55
Not a resident	3.39%	2
<i>Total responses:</i>		59

Question 6

“Which of the following best characterizes your connection to Watson Township (Please select all that apply)?”

Response	Percent	Count
Student	0.00%	0
Commercial property owner	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	1.69%	1
Residential property owner (Landlord)	3.39%	2
Business owner in the Township	6.78%	4
Work in the Township	8.47%	5
Resident (year-round or seasonal)	94.92%	56
<i>Total responses:</i>		59

Other Responses: *“property owner”*

Question 7

“In what type of dwelling do you live?”

Response	Percent	Count
Single-family home (on more than 5 acres)	44.07%	26
Single-family home (on 1 to 5 acres)	28.81%	17
Single-family home (on less than one acre)	23.73%	14
Manufactured home	3.39%	2
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Multi-family home (condo, apartment, etc.)	0.00%	0
Duplex	0.00%	0
<i>Total responses:</i>		59

Question 8

“Do you own or rent your home?”

Response	Percent	Count
Own	98.31%	58
Rent	1.69%	1
<i>Total responses:</i>		59

Question 9

“What is your primary place of work?”

Response	Percent	Count
Grand Rapids area (including Wyoming, Kentwood, Grandville, Walker)	20.34%	12
Retired	18.64%	11
Allegan	13.56%	8
Other (please specify)	10.17%	6
Otsego-Plainwell area	8.47%	5
Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area	6.78%	4
Martin	5.08%	3
Work from Home	5.08%	3
Elsewhere in Kalamazoo County	5.08%	3
Wayland	3.39%	2
Elsewhere in Allegan County	3.39%	2
Holland-Zeeland area	0.00%	0
Watson Township (but not from home)	0.00%	0
Elsewhere in Barry County	0.00%	0
Stay-at-home parent	0.00%	0
Student	0.00%	0
<i>Total responses:</i>		59

Other Responses: *“Don’t see this as significant data for survey”*
“Hopkins”
“Grand Rapids to the south of K-zoo. I’m a realtor”
“Otr”

Opinions (10 – 16)

Question 10

“In your opinion, Watson Township is growing:”

Response	Percent	Count
No opinion	14.29%	8
Watson Township is not	5.36%	3
Too slowly	12.50%	7
Just right	41.07%	23
Too quickly	26.79%	15
<i>Total responses:</i>		56

Question 11

“In your opinion, Watson Township's efforts to guide growth and development have been:”

Response	Percent	Count
Very poor	3.64%	2
Somewhat poor	18.18%	10
No opinion	47.27%	26
Somewhat good	23.64%	13
Very good	7.27%	4
<i>Total responses:</i>		55

Question 12

“Where are you most likely to go for the following goods and services?”

Response	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count
	<i>Entertainment</i>		<i>Groceries</i>		<i>Recreation</i>	
Allegan	10.91%	6	5.45%	3	6.25%	3
Elsewhere in Allegan County	5.45%	3	10.91%	6	25.00%	12
Elsewhere in Barry County	1.82%	1	0.00%	0	4.17%	2
Elsewhere in Kalamazoo County	1.82%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Grand Rapids area (including Wyoming, Kentwood, Grandville, Walker)	27.27%	15	0.00%	0	18.75%	9
Holland-Zeeland area	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	6.25%	3
Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area	16.36%	9	1.82%	1	6.25%	3
Martin	0.00%	0	1.82%	1	4.17%	2
Otsego-Plainwell area	34.55%	19	76.36%	42	16.67%	8
Watson Township	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	12.50%	6
Wayland	1.82%	1	3.64%	2	0.00%	0
<i>Total responses:</i>		55		55		48

Question 13

“How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Watson Township?”

Question 13.1

“Traffic congestion”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	29.09%	16
Slightly Agree	36.36%	20
No Opinion	16.36%	9
Slightly Disagree	12.73%	7
Strongly Disagree	5.45%	3
<i>Total responses:</i>		55

Question 13.2

“Traffic speeds”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	27.78%	15
Slightly Agree	38.89%	21
No Opinion	14.81%	8
Slightly Disagree	12.96%	7
Strongly Disagree	5.56%	3
<i>Total responses:</i>		54

Question 13.3

“Public road quality”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	10.91%	6
Slightly Agree	16.36%	9
No Opinion	7.27%	4
Slightly Disagree	38.18%	21
Strongly Disagree	27.27%	15
Total responses:		55

Question 13.4

“Number of bike trails/paved shoulders”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	10.91%	6
Slightly Agree	9.09%	5
No Opinion	34.55%	19
Slightly Disagree	27.27%	15
Strongly Disagree	18.18%	10
Total responses:		55

Question 13.5

“Quality of groundwater”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	26.92%	14
Slightly Agree	32.69%	17
No Opinion	25.00%	13
Slightly Disagree	7.69%	4
Strongly Disagree	7.69%	4
Total responses:		52

Question 13.6

“Quality of surface water”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	16.98%	9
Slightly Agree	33.96%	18
No Opinion	35.85%	19
Slightly Disagree	11.32%	6
Strongly Disagree	1.89%	1
Total responses:		53

Question 13.7

“Enforcement of zoning and property maintenance”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	14.55%	8
Slightly Agree	12.73%	7
No Opinion	27.27%	15
Slightly Disagree	34.55%	19
Strongly Disagree	10.91%	6
Total responses:		55

Question 13.8

“Amount of farmland converted to residential lots”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	3.77%	2
Slightly Agree	16.98%	9
No Opinion	45.28%	24
Slightly Disagree	18.87%	10
Strongly Disagree	15.09%	8
Total responses:		53

Question 13.9

“Amount of open space, natural areas, and parks”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	10.91%	6
Slightly Agree	18.18%	10
No Opinion	30.91%	17
Slightly Disagree	23.64%	13
Strongly Disagree	16.36%	9
Total responses:		54

Question 13.10

“Guidance of commercial development”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	3.77%	2
Slightly Agree	15.09%	8
No Opinion	56.60%	30
Slightly Disagree	18.87%	10
Strongly Disagree	5.66%	3
Total responses:		53

Question 13.11

“Guidance of residential development”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	11.76%	6
Slightly Agree	19.61%	10
No Opinion	49.02%	25
Slightly Disagree	17.65%	9
Strongly Disagree	1.96%	1
Total responses:		51

Question 13.12

“Adequacy of public safety (police, fire, etc.)”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	26.42%	14
Slightly Agree	41.51%	22
No Opinion	20.75%	11
Slightly Disagree	5.66%	3
Strongly Disagree	5.66%	3
Total responses:		53

Question 13.13

“Adequacy of shopping areas”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	18.52%	10
Slightly Agree	18.52%	10
No Opinion	20.37%	11
Slightly Disagree	24.07%	13
Strongly Disagree	18.52%	10
Total responses:		54

Question 13.14

“Amount of recreational facilities”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	11.11%	6
Slightly Agree	16.67%	9
No Opinion	18.52%	10
Slightly Disagree	35.19%	19
Strongly Disagree	18.52%	10
Total responses:		54

Question 13.15

“Amount of available entertainment and social activities”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	13.21%	7
Slightly Agree	18.87%	10
No Opinion	26.42%	14
Slightly Disagree	26.42%	14
Strongly Disagree	15.09%	8
Total responses:		53

Question 13.16

“New housing costs”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	3.85%	2
Slightly Agree	11.54%	6
No Opinion	51.92%	27
Slightly Disagree	19.23%	10
Strongly Disagree	13.46%	7
Total responses:		52

Question 13.17

“Variety of housing options (senior living, rentals, etc.)”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	9.09%	5
Slightly Agree	9.09%	5
No Opinion	58.18%	32
Slightly Disagree	18.18%	10
Strongly Disagree	5.45%	3
Total responses:		55

Question 14

“What types of housing would you most like to see in Watson Township? (Check all that apply)”

Response	Percent	Count
Single-family homes (on more than 5 acres)	50.91%	28
Single-family homes (on 1 to 5 acres)	45.45%	25
Single-family homes (on less than 1 acre)	30.91%	17
Retirement community/assisted living	14.55%	8
Accessory dwelling units ("inlaw suites") or guest houses	12.73%	7
Tiny homes (less than 500 sq. ft.)	12.73%	7
Manufactured housing	5.45%	3
Multi-family housing (apartments, condos, etc.)	5.45%	3
Duplexes	3.64%	2
Other (please specify)	3.64%	2

Total responses: 55

Other Responses: "none"

"We moved here for the rural aspect - we are happy with the current amount of housing."

Question 15

“What types of businesses would you most like to see in Watson Township? (Check all that apply)”

Response	Percent	Count
Farm markets/agri-tourism	55.36%	31
Sit-down restaurants	37.50%	21
Personal services (barber or beauty shops, fitness centers, dry cleaning, etc.)	26.79%	15
Breweries/distilleries/wineries	21.43%	12
No new businesses in the Township	21.43%	12
Retail	17.86%	10
Solar/wind farms	17.86%	10
Other (please specify)	10.71%	6
Fast food restaurants	7.14%	4
Marijuana establishments	7.14%	4
Hotels and accommodations	3.57%	2
No opinion	3.57%	2
Assembly and Manufacturing	1.79%	1
Financial, business, and professional services	1.79%	1
Regional shopping center	0.00%	0
Research and development	0.00%	0

Total responses: 55

Question 15 (cont.)

Other Responses: "None"

"none"

"home-based businesses"

"sfagag"

"We moved to Watson onto 40 acres for the remote and private living. If we leave the property it's usually to visit family. We both grew up in Grand Rapids and do not want that for our kids or grandchildren. Yes the internet is difficult to deal with at times but we made this choice and will deal with the services that we need to travel for."

"we are a rural community within a short driving distance to any type of businesses we need. Keep us just the way we are."

Preferences (16 – 22)

Question 16

“Watson Township should acquire more land for parks, natural and recreational areas, and non-motorized trails.”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	7.27%	4
Slightly Agree	43.64%	24
No Opinion	20.00%	11
Slightly Disagree	9.09%	5
Strongly Disagree	20.00%	11

Total responses: 55

Question 17

“I would support a dedicated millage in Watson Township to acquire and maintain land for parks, natural and recreational areas, and non-motorized trails.”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	14.55%	8
Slightly Agree	27.27%	15
No Opinion	16.36%	9
Slightly Disagree	5.45%	3
Strongly Disagree	36.36%	20

Total responses: 55

Question 18

“I would support a dedicated road millage in Watson Township to improve public road quality.”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	27.27%	15
Slightly Agree	27.27%	15
No Opinion	23.64%	13
Slightly Disagree	10.91%	6
Strongly Disagree	10.91%	6
Total responses:		55

Question 19

“Watson Township needs to attract more businesses and commercial development.”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	5.45%	3
Slightly Agree	27.27%	15
No Opinion	14.55%	8
Slightly Disagree	5.45%	3
Strongly Disagree	47.27%	26
Total responses:		55

Question 20

“Watson Township should preserve farmland.”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	32.00%	32
Slightly Agree	15.00%	15
No Opinion	3.00%	3
Slightly Disagree	3.77%	2
Strongly Disagree	1.89%	1
Total responses:		53

Question 21

“I would be willing to attend a public input meeting about the Watson Township Master Plan and share my thoughts and opinions.”

Response	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	32.73%	18
Slightly Agree	34.55%	19
No Opinion	30.91%	17
Slightly Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	1.82%	1
Total responses:		55

Question 22

“If there is anything else you would like your Watson Township local government to know, please include in the box below any questions, concerns, or other comments you may have.”

Responses:

- *“Blight in this area is out of control, we call and nothing is done, tired of looking at smashed vehicles in driveways on my road, depreciates my property while the township taxes keep raising...”*
- *“A3 Zone to preserve the Watson Hills with minimum 15 acre lots”*
- *“We are a rural community and wish to stay that way. We feel the local government is trying to make us an urban community. Also the local government is trying to expand its size and power. Taxes a high when compared to the services provided.”*
- *“Regular office hours for Supervisor, Clerk”*
- *“For the questions that would not pertain to our family I answered “no opinion”. We love living in the quiet country and do not want more commercial development. Attract more home OWNERS not renters that care very little for the property around them. Encourage local shopping.”*
- *“Improve the dirt roads with better/more grading and push back/fix all the sides/shoulders of the roads. The roads are getting too narrow unsafe in some areas. More grading. Recover gravel on shoulders.”*
- *“Thanks for stopping the gravel pit over off 117th Ave for now. Hopefully it's the last time we have to debate it. Nobody here wants it, except the guy making money from it.”*
- *“More paved roads. Better internet access. Parks and activities for kids ... keep the kids coming back to Watson as they grow older.”*
- *“We think 5acre lots eat up land. 1 acre is plenty of area for single family. Too much mowing”*
- *“Thank you all for your service to Watson Township on our behalf, we greatly appreciate it! Keep up the awesome work.”*
- *“I would like to see Watson focus/spend money on trash/ recycle pickup for all, including people that can't afford a weekly pickup. Our roadsides are trashy and you can see many “poorer” neighborhoods that need some assistance. Is there an ordinance that deals with the build up of trash.? Also I am concerned for the environment, so the use of the “dust control” is an irritation to us.”*
- *“Please continue to take care of the Blithe in the community. In my opinion because Watson Township is in the perfect location between Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids we should continue developing single family homes.”*
- *“I love everything about Watson Township with the exception of internet service options and our poor well water quality.”*
- *“Would like to see our elected officials actually work for the money being paid, and once again having office hours without hiring an outside person to do the job. Don't see why our clerk and treasurer need to be paid over and above their annual pay to collect taxes and do elections. That is their job. Your bleeding the township, right down to paying*

now an extra \$1,200 for someone to oversee hall rental."

- *"We moved out here to be free from the city and all it's rules and regulations. I enjoy living in a primary agricultural county. If I wanted more I would move to a HOA subdivision in the city."*
- *"'Gravel' road quality and structure is horrible yet we dump loads of money into it each year to pour dust control on it."*
- *"Less funding for the fire department and absolutely no funding to the parks"*
- *"Check the typo in question 16. Somewhat disagree is listed twice--once in the wrong spot."*
- *"Traffic on 16th st going north to 121st and East to 15th then north to 124th for access to the hi-way has gotten a lot heavier in the last couple years. When is the township going to consider paving this stretch of road. The county tries to keep it graded, bit the amount of traffic along with the speed on which the vehicles travel just tears it up. What is the long term plan to finish the pavement the whole length of 16th st?"*
- *"The grading and maintenance of the dirt roads are awful! Many wash outs, sink holes, and a huge ledge at our drive meeting the road. I love the clean up days that is great, love the bike race also the kids love to sit and watch them go by!"*
- *"We moved here to live in the country and enjoy country living. Slower pace, less people, less government over site and friendly neighbors but not living on top of each other. I strongly feel the past and current Township plan is moving Watson to being more like an URBAN Township. Zoning and ordnances resemble that of urban areas and not the country. I believe taxes are high and services or low. I also know the Township received a large amount of Federal Covid funds and have not heard a word about how it will be used. I also feel the Township shies away from criticism and conflict. I would like the Township to return to its country roots with reasonable taxes and less government over site."*
- *"Stop putting up with the turmoil caused by [resident] on Big Lake please!"*
- *"Watson is a nice township we just don't have a lot to offer. We have to go elsewhere for everything. We don't need more dollar stores, liquor stores or marijuana facilities. We need to maintain our wholesomeness. We do need better care of the dirt roads and more patrols on them. We do need the township ordinances enforced the burning of chemicals trash and anything under the sun is out of hand. You can't drive 222 near the lake and not smell it. I couldn't imagine living there. These people putting up tiny houses all over need to be regulated as well as those popping campers on others land and living out of them dumping sewage all over are a health hazards to everything including our ground water. The schools could be a problem with all the pornographic materials being forced upon children. We need to maintain our small town wholesomeness at all costs and regulate the growth accordingly."*
- *"Question #16's answers are queued up wrong (there is no "strongly agree" -- and that would be my answer if it gets fixed.) I am strongly in favor of: "16. Watson Township should acquire more land for parks, natural and recreational areas, and non-motorized trails." Like 110% in favor (probably more)."*
- *"Watson township doesn't need more development of homes or commercial structures - we need to preserve the rural quiet feel. We left the greater Grand Rapids area to come here for the community and the peace and quiet - not the feel of a city."*
- *"Get rid of PCI they are a waste of our tax dollars."*
- *"Too many dirt roads"*
- *"Recycling is needed. Broadband should be a priority for the townships infrastructure"*
- *"#20 I would strongly agree however that is not an option. also most people have larger yards in Watson so why the need for parks?"*
- *"Quit trying to make Watson Twp into a suburban community township !!!"*

